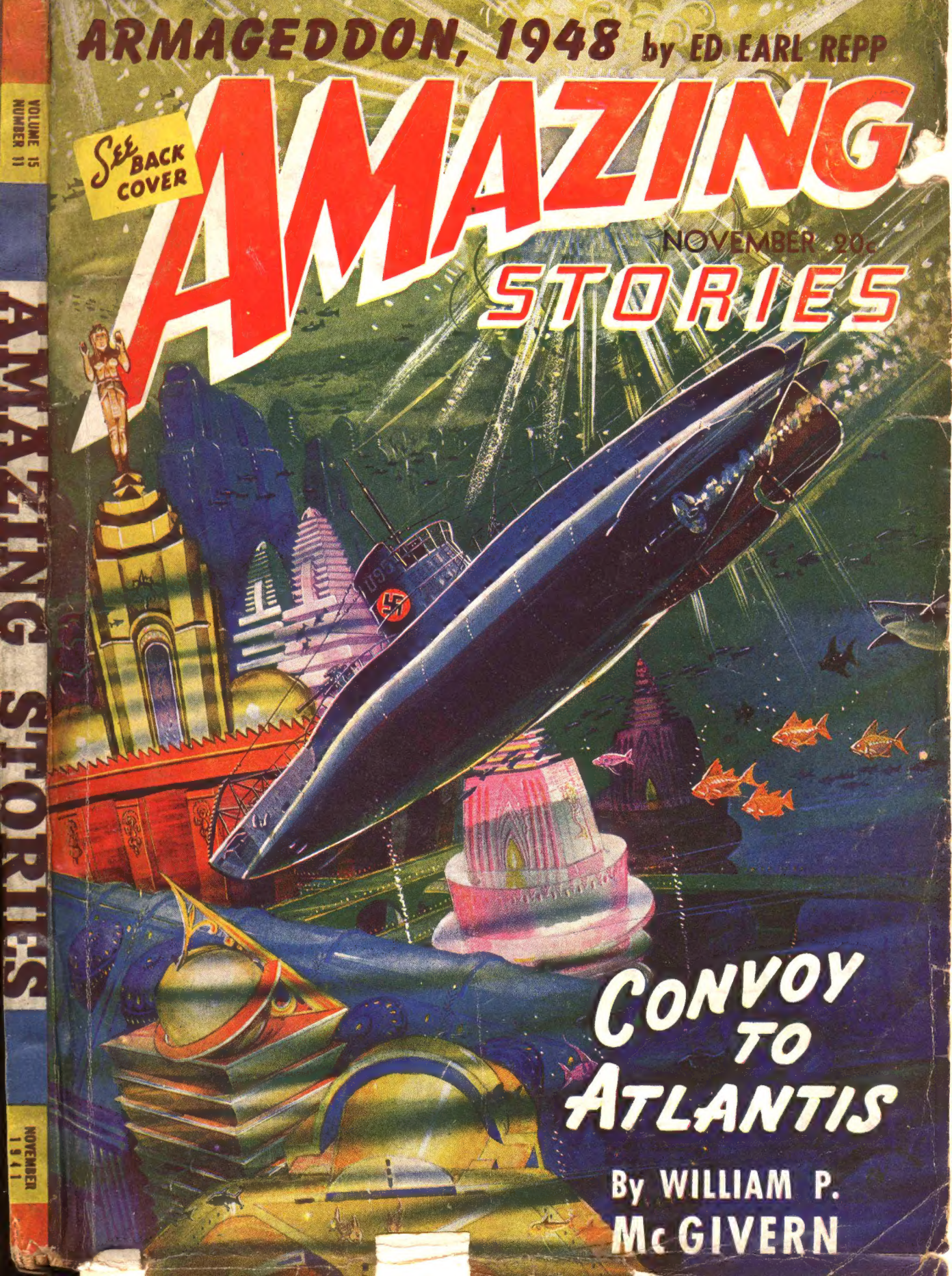
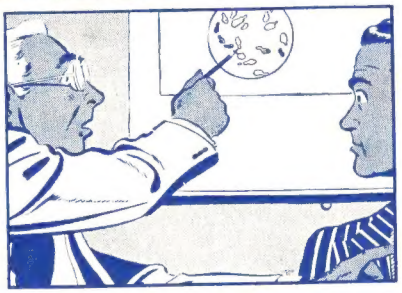

ARMAGEDDON, 1948 by ED EARL REPP
See Back Cover
AMAZING STORIES
NOVEMBER 20c
CONVOY TO ATLANTIS
By WILLIAM P. McGIVERN
AMAZING STORIES
VOLUME 15 NUMBER 11
NOVEMBER 1941

I'M THROUGH FOOLING AROUND WITH AN infectious condition!

1 WHAT TO TRY NEXT? That dandruff was so unbelievably stubborn! I was sure upset—suppose this was the infectious kind! When my wife suggested Listerine, I said, "First, I'll ask Doctor Joe!"



2 BOY! WAS I GLAD TO HEAR from the good old Doc that Listerine Antiseptic kills millions of germs associated with infectious dandruff! Hope at last! I'd *try* Listerine and massage. It helped other dandruff victims—would it help me? I could hardly wait to get started!

3 AFTER A WEEK I WAS CONVINCED! Itching let up—scales began to go! . . . my scalp felt more vigorous and healthy. Take it from me, massaging with Listerine Antiseptic morning and night sure did a swell job for me.

Start these easy home treatments today

If you have any of the symptoms that often go with that common scalp condition, infectious dandruff —*itching, inflammation, flakes, scales*—don't neglect them. If you do, you may regret it. Start this very day to give your hair and scalp antiseptic baths with Listerine Antiseptic.

76% OF CASES IMPROVED IN CLINICAL TEST

Listerine, the antiseptic which has been famous for more than 50 years as a mouthwash and gargle, kills millions of germs associated with the infectious type of dandruff. Yes—and it destroys, on contact, hosts of the insidious "bottle bacillus" which many leading specialists recognize as a causative agent of the condition.

Just look at the results of one series of clinical tests on men and women who used Listerine Antiseptic and massage twice a day . . . 76% of these sufferers showed either complete disappearance of or marked improvement in the symptoms of dandruff within 30 days.

If you have signs of an infectious dandruff condition, get after them *today* with the treatment thousands follow.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO., *St. Louis, Mo.*

For INFECTIOUS DANDRUFF use LISTERINE

HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED—THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!

MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH, MARY EVERYTHING LOOKS SO HOPELESS
IT ISN'T HOPELESS, BILL. WHY DON'T YOU TRY RADIO. TOM GREEN IS DOING WELL. TALK TO HIM
BILL, JUST MAILING THAT COUPON GAVE ME A QUICK START TO SUCCESS IN RADIO. MAIL THIS ONE TONIGHT. RADIO'S STILL A YOUNG GROWING FIELD
TOM'S RIGHT. AN UNTRAINED MAN HASN'T A CHANCE. I'M GOING TO TRAIN FOR RADIO TOO. IT'S TODAY'S FIELD OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOOD PAY
TRAINING AT HOME FOR RADIO IS PRACTICAL AND I'M GETTING ALONG FAST
SOON I CAN START FIXING RADIOS
THERE'S NO END TO THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WELL TRAINED TECHNICIANS
OR WORK ON LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEMS
OR GET A JOB IN A BROADCASTING STATION
YOU SURE KNOW RADIO. MY SET NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
THANKS! THAT'S $10 EXTRA I'VE MADE THIS WEEK IN SPARE TIME
OH BILL, IT'S WONDERFUL. YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO
I HAVE A GOOD FULL TIME JOB NOW—AND A BRIGHT FUTURE IN RADIO AND TELEVISION

I Trained These Men

Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator. HOLLIS F. HAYES, 327 Madison St., Lapeer, Michigan.

Service Manager for Four Stores

I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N. R. I. I am now Radio Service Manager for the M—— Furniture Co. for their four stores. JAMES E. RYAN, 119 Pebble Court, Fall River, Mass.

$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time

I am doing spare time Radio work, and I am averaging around $500 a year. Those extra dollars mean so much—the difference between just barely getting by and living comfortably. JOHN WANSHKO, 97 New Cranberry, Hazleton, Penna.

In U. S. Signal Corps

I am in the U. S. Army, Signal Corps, as Chief Radio Clerk. My duties also include maintenance of the transmitter and receivers when the Chief Radio Operator is absent. R. W. ANDERSON, Radio Station WTI, Vancouver Barracks, Washington.

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NOVEMBER
1941

AMAZING STORIES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

VOLUME 15
NUMBER 11

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Front cover painting by Robert Fuqua, illustrating a scene from **"Convoy To Atlantis"**
Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul, depicting **"A City On Titan"**
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AMAZING STORIES NOVEMBER 1941

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Volume 15
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28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15	
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15	
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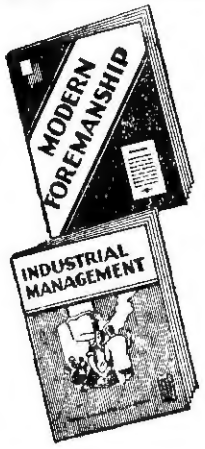

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CHICAGO ILLINOIS

WE have so much to say this month we hardly know where to start. And rather important stuff too! The magazine, stories, some recent editorial experiences, a trip on which Amazing things happened, New Fandom and other groups of readers, the war, etc.

FIRST, let's put in a few words about this issue that are pertinent. The cover, and the story it illustrates, "Convoy to Atlantis," should be a must on your reading list immediately when you finish this column.

We, the editors, don't claim this to be true, naturally, although much of it is based on truth, we have a hunch that author McGivern, and ourselves, via footnotes, have seen something of the future that we'd almost be willing to admit came to us via a time machine.

If it comes true, to any extent, don't say we didn't tell you!

WE bring back Ed Earl Repp this month, after a long absence, with a really fine yarn, in his traditional and well-liked style. The illustration for it is by Rod Ruth, and ought to ring the bell with you.

THE reception you gave to the September cover, featuring Stanton A. Coblentz's first-place novel, has been so gratifying to us, that we present this month's cover as a follow-up to it, and one we believe will absolutely convince you that Robert Fuqua has now hit a stride of continual excellence that is almost sensational. He is undoubtedly the modern master of the gadget, and of that weird, mystic quality that best befits the word "amazing," as our stories try to create it. Your comments, please.

RECENTLY we received word from Nelson S. Bond of the latest novel he is planning for AMAZING STORIES. We gave him the go-ahead sign, and we fully expect that you will soon be reading a new serial even better than "Sons of the Deluge." Which ought to convince readers who have feared Bond was no longer of our fold that their fears are utterly groundless. Bond still gives us his sparkling efforts and no questions asked; cross our heart!

THERE has been a lot of mystery around the office, because during a recent week-end, your editor hied himself off to Richmond, Va., on an unexplained trip which consumed four days. The fact is, we just played hookey, and forgot AMAZING STORIES for awhile. Which might indicate that we are temperamental, but really indicates that we are really only a naughty boy at heart.

HOWEVER, what happened to us on that trip could happen only to the editor of a magazine such as this. Only this editor, and his new Buick, could sneak past a man with a flag in West Virginia, and get within a hundred feet of a charge of dynamite in the roadbed (which was under construction) before it went off. Having faced Martian invasions, and monsters on the moon, our usual courage asserted itself and we found ourselves crouching under a steam-shovel while rocks showered down.

AT least, that's how we explained that smashed fender to the rest of the office force! They don't have to believe it, if they don't want to. You don't either. But just the same, we assure you that the next time we have Mars invading Earth, it will be West Virginia we will destroy first—they scared the hell out of us!

ALSO to West Virginia can be credited the second of our weird adventures. A restaurant waitress, when asked for a menu, fetched one, then waited patiently while we decided what we wanted. It must have taken too long, because she finally ventured: "Can you read?"

Rather shamefaced, we looked up and stammered: "N-no."

So she read the menu through for us, and we selected ham and eggs.

Which isn't so odd. Many of you readers have long claimed we couldn't read, else why did we select some of the stories we have presented.

If that waitress reads this, we apologize!

But not to the state of West Virginia! Our "fan mail" needn't be *that* vociferous!

SAM MOSKOWITZ, 603 S. 11th Street, Newark, N. J., writes in reference to what we said last month about a group of fans called "New Fandom." He says:

"I want to assure you that none of the letters you received concerning Phil Stong's anthology spoke for 'New Fandom' and that you didn't receive any letters from active members of 'New Fandom.'

"You couldn't have, because 'New Fandom' has been in a state of suspended animation for over a year, and only very recently staggered out of its comatose state. Furthermore, no member has ever reviewed Phil Stong's book in any fan or professional magazine, and I don't understand why you dragged in 'New Fandom' at all."

WE mentioned "an editor" as having given the review. That editor, to quote the latest fan magazine we received, "Fantasy News", was Donald Wollheim. We believed him to be a member of "New Fandom". If he is from another fan group, we apologize for the statement.

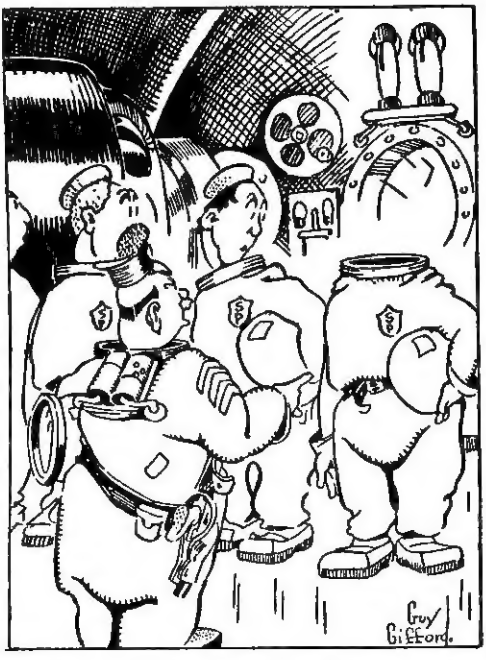
RECENTLY, we had news that contrary to the selection of Los Angeles for the 1942 Science Fiction Convention, by the Denver delegates, other sites are once more in competition. Minneapolis, for one.

OUR point, and not a destructive one, is that the fans who subscribe to these "world" conventions ought to work together, rather than at odds. You attain nothing but a tug-of-war, and no concrete results come of your efforts. You state, personally, not for publication, in your letter other things, which we won't comment on, because you wish it. But we think that one statement included does not come under that heading. You said: "AMAZING STORIES was the only magazine to print a letter by Wiggins against the First World Science Fiction Convention".

WE in our editorial chair, can't distinguish between these groups. Thus, when a fan writes in, as spokesman for a group, advocating a convention, and asking for publicity, we give it, because we want to help the fans to make their conventions a success. And Wiggins reached us first. How were we to know he represented a minority group, and that his convention was the wrong one?

You all know what we did to make up for it the next year. And not because the site was Chicago. You yourselves selected that site at the New York convention. We provided paintings and illustrations originally worth $6,000.00; we painted signs for the convention. We provided free copies (advance copies) for all who attended. We bought ads in the program to help finance the convention. And we opened our offices to the fans with the welcome mat right out front.

ONE month later, one large group, (was it yours,) decided to discontinue connections with AMAZING STORIES and all "pro" magazines.



"When we hit Marsport, Private Smooge, get a spacesuit that doesn't give everyone the jitters!"

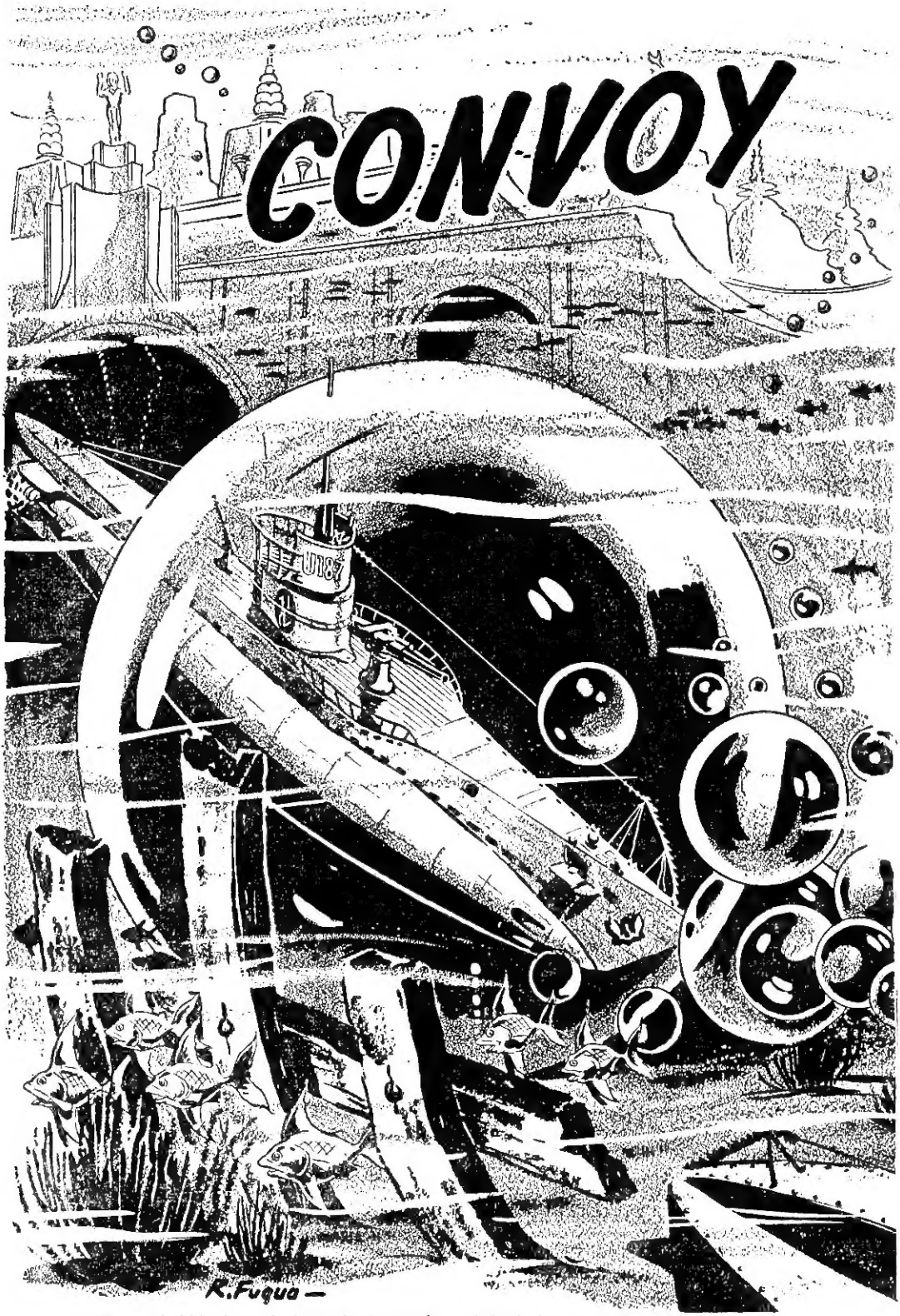
NOW, why can't these world conventions be held for a world organization, and really made worthwhile? You are all readers of the same magazines, and your publicity comes from them. Why not use the facilities they offer? If you who stage these conventions can form a unified national group, we offer you a monthly page, set aside for your own department, and edited by yourselves (with the exception of supervision by us for safeguarding legal aspects, etc.).

AND far from tearing down the vast organization of intercommunicating fans, who have local clubs in many cities (of which we are justly proud) we will give you all the help it is possible to give.

POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY, our companion magazine, has started, and aided, many camera clubs all over the country. We, as publishers, encourage all such activities, because they are healthy. So, you fans, whatever your local name may be, get together and give this editor a chance to help you. And what we've just said is criticism, certainly, but we expect you to criticize us too. It helps to make a good thing better.

INCIDENTALLY, any of our readers who would like to join a local science fiction club, why not drop a line stating your desire, and we'll publish it in the Correspondence Corner. All fans read it, and you'll hear from your local group.

RAP



A vast bubble formed about the Nazi sub; and Brick depressed the spark lever

TO ATLANTIS

by WILLIAM P. McGIVERN

Beneath the waves of the Atlantic lay a great menace to America—hundreds of Nazi submarines based in an incredible undersea city!

THE incident which the entire world had been anticipating for months finally occurred at nine-fifteen on the evening of September twenty-second.

It was a warm night and the air was still. The long slow swells of the North Atlantic moved as silently and heavily as molten lead. Everything was calm and quiet and peaceful.

One minute before it happened—at nine-fourteen to be exact—Brick Harrington, United States seaman, first class, sauntered to the side of the American convoy ship, *Vulcan,* and rested his arms on the rail. Glancing down at the frothing waves formed by the swiftly cutting prow of the boat, he yawned sleepily.

He was a tall young man with heavily muscled shoulders and quiet, level gray eyes. A thick unruly thatch of red hair topped his six-foot frame, accounting for his nickname, Brick.

His features were clean cut, almost harsh in their angularity, but they were relieved by the humorous twist of his lips and the pleasant glint in his eyes. That glint, however, could on occasion freeze to the color of chilled steel on a frosty morning. Summed up, he was what he looked: an American seaman, tough and efficient and about as dangerous to hit as dynamite.

Still yawning, he turned from the rail, just as a wiry little man popped from a companion-way behind him and trotted over to him.

"It's time you turned in," the little man snapped wrathfully. "You glorified deck swabbers are all alike. Think you're too tough to need an hour of sleep in twenty-four. You can't do it, I say. You can't do it. Now get down to your bunk before I forget my age and good sense and larrup you across the stern with an anchor chain!"

Brick grinned good-naturedly. Pop Carter's bark was infinitely worse than his bite. Although only a seaman, first class, he didn't let that stop him from fussing over, and worrying about, every man on board the *Vulcan*. For twenty years Pop had pounded decks from one end of the world to another, and his red, monkey-like features had faced salty breezes and gales in all the seven oceans. A better indication of the man, than his nagging fretful mannerisms, were the two sparks of humor that sparked deep in his sea-blue eyes and occasionally prompted an unwilling smile to his leathery cheeks

Brick liked the peppery little man a lot, but he could seldom resist the opportunity to wave a red flag before his quick and highly volatile temper. He wiped the grin from his face and looked gravely at the little man.

"Okay, Pop," he said with mock seriousness. "I'll get below. But I just had to take a last look to see for myself that there weren't any subs nosing up alongside to steal our life preservers. Now that I know things are clear I'll sleep a lot easier."

"Dang it," Pop snorted explosively, "you're goin' to push me too far one of these times, Brick, and I'm goin' to teach you some manners with a belayin' pin. You know as well as me that there ain't a sub within a hundred miles of here."

"Sure," Brick grinned. "I know it. But up till now you've been swearing that we were practically sailing over their backs. I just wanted to hear you admit that things aren't as bad as all that."

"Oh did you?" the little seaman boiled. "Well if you ain't in your bunk inside ten seconds I'll make you wish you'd never been born with that lop-sided sense of humor of yours."

"You win," Brick laughed. "You've got me scared to bits, Pop. What time is it now?"

"I don't know what difference it makes," Pop grunted, fishing his watch from his pocket, "but it's exactly nine fifteen."

IT happened then! The incident which Statesmen and Correspondents had been prophesying for weeks became a fact at that instant, as the ugly speeding snout of a six thousand pound torpedo smashed into the armored hull of the U. S. convoy boat, *Vulcan!**

It was determined later, by Navy

*When the Lease-lend bill was passed by Congress, it was the opinion of many statesmen and correspondents that it would eventually mean United States navy convoying of the materials to be shipped to Britain. As it turned out, this was what happened, and U. S. ships took up patrol duty far into the Atlantic, and cooperated with British ships in warning of the presence of raiders. No actual fighting, or shooting was the result, except one instance reported by Secretary Knox, of a destroyer dropping depth bombs during rescue work.—Ed.

officials, that the explosion of the ship's magazine chambers occurred almost simultaneously with the impact of the torpedo!

Because of the blackness of the night the starboard lookout had not seen the deadly streak of churning white heading directly for the ship. The torpedo had scored a hit—a fatal hit—at exactly nine-fifteen.

Brick had been turning to the companionway when the projectile smashed into the amored side of the ship jarring it like the impact of a mighty fist. There was not time to think; no time to reason. A hoarse scream sounded for an instant over the sudden tumult that swept the ship, and then two explosions roared into the night's silence smothering the ship with a blanket of incredible sound.

Brick was thrown to the deck by the torpedo's impact.

The explosions occurred before he could crawl to his feet. Under his body he could feel the armor plate of the *Vulcan* buckling and twisting like cardboard. The ship was shuddering mightily, and the heaving, wrenching groans of its steel structure sounded in his ears like the death agonies of a wounded giant. Through the dazed fog of shock and terror he could hear the terrible roar of escaping steam and the greedy, sucking rush of water as it poured into the ship's vitals.

His body rolled drunkenly as the ship listed. A smothering, battering wall of water smashed down on him, hurling him against the rail with rib-cracking force. Strangling and stunned he had no power to resist the swift clutch of the water dragging him over the side and into the boiling turmoil of the ocean.

A timeless instant followed. An instant in which screams and the sound of hissing water and groaning steel blended with the deafening roar of the smashing, surging waves.

For an instant his head broke through the water and his lungs automatically jerked in a mouthful of air. Then he was caught in the tremendous suction created by the sinking ship and dragged helplessly down and down.

Instinctively his arms thrashed out, fighting blindly and desperately against the strangling, crushing pressure. For minutes, it seemed, the downward suction of the *Vulcan* continued to hold him in its fatal grip. With the desperate strength of a man fighting for life, Brick lashed out with arms and legs in a last frantic effort. The pressure on his lungs was like that of a giant vise. Through the pain and the desperation, one foggy section of his numbed mind cleared enough to realize that the fight he was waging was hopeless.

His arms were almost too heavy to move and his tortured lungs were at the bursting point, when the clutch of water released him suddenly. A roaring torrent of noise sounded beneath him and almost simultaneously a tremendous rush of air and water caught hold of his limp body and carried it in a rush to the surface.

HIS lungs gulped air gratefully. Groggily, he realized that it must have been another explosion in the settling *Vulcan* that had created the sudden upsurge of air and water that had hurled him to the surface.

Huge, choppy waves covered with an inch of slimy oil were battering against him, but by dog-paddling frantically he managed to keep afloat. As his brain cleared he realized the hopelessness of his position. His body had been weakened by the terrific buffeting it had received and there was a dull pain creeping up the right side of his body from his hip to his collar bone. He was still

too dazed to realize the enormity of what had happened to himself and the *Vulcan*. In one devastating explosion his ship, with all hands aboard, had plunged to the bottom of the Atlantic. His own life had been spared momentarily, but he was alert enough to know that his chances of survival were practically non-existent.

The supply boats which the *Vulcan* had been patrolling were proceeding slowly at a distance of about thirty miles behind the convoy.* Other destroyers had been flanking the supply chain at about the same distance to the rear. Before they would reach him, providing he could maintain his position against the undertow and currents, his exhausted body would have been claimed by the wet embrace of the ocean.

These things he realized instinctively, almost subconsciously. Consciously his stunned senses were aware only of the heavy, oil-blanketed water on his body and the soft, warm wind on his face.

It was probably because of this that he was conscious of the first sluggish swell that lifted his body in the water. It was followed by another, steeper swell. Then he felt the unnatural eddying currents that were boiling beneath him and causing the uneasy movement of the water.

He twisted his body in the water and saw the heavy ripples were originating about a hundred yards from where he was floating. They were growing higher by the minute, rocking him up and down in six foot swings.

Then, as a particularly deep swell lifted above the water he saw a slim, black hull break the surface of the water. Hissing white streams of bubbles broke and poured from its shining sides, as it rose steadily from the depths. With the unhurried majesty of a killer shark the sinister gleaming length knifed the blackness of the night until it rested silently and ominously on the choppy crests its rising had created.

Brick stared at the silent spectre in amazement. For he recognized the sleek, dangerous lines of the emerging craft as a German sub, of the latest and most mercilessly efficient type!

*This is the accepted method of convoying. Subs usually lie in wait, motors silent, or come up from the rear, or flank a convoy. Thus, the "ears" of the destroyers must detect them before they get within striking distance, and chase them away or sink them with depth bombs. This is possible because of their great speed.—Ed.

CHAPTER II

Rescue!

FOR a minute silence held over the water and then Brick heard the metallic sounds of steel clamps releasing their grips and the hissing noise of compressed air.

A door swung upward from the conning tower and he saw three figures emerge and clamber down to the narrow deck of the sub. Guttural voices reached him across the hundred-yard stretch and he could hear the faint hollow sounds of heavy shoes on the steel decks of the sub.

After another few seconds a bright, powerful finger of light probed forth from the side of the undersea craft and began a searching sweep of the dark water.

Again he heard guttural orders issuing from the Nazi seamen on the deck, and then the brilliant finger of light touched him, bathing him for an instant in glaring whiteness, swung on. A sharp exclamation reached him from the sub and the light swung hastily back, blinding him again with its revealing glare.

Brick waved a tired hand in the air. He could see figures on the sub wave back and several shouts reached him. He saw then that preparations for launching a boat were getting underway.

He paddled toward them slowly, favoring his right side as much as possible. This sub, he knew, was probably the one that had launched the torpedo that destroyed the *Vulcan*.

The conclusion was automatic. Till that instant the thought of a German sub being responsible for the sinking had been far from his thoughts. It just hadn't occurred to his numbed mind. But seeing the deadly length of a German sub brought it to him forcefully.

It had done the job, he knew. There was no rancor or bitterness in his reasoning. Just a dull feeling of inevitability.

Watching the shadowy shape of the collapsible rowboat nearing, a peculiar, irrelevant thought came to him. If shooting *did* mean war, what part would Brick Harrington, seaman, first class, play in that war?

THE boat was almost next to him now, so he stopped paddling and treaded water feebly. It wasn't until he stopped swimming that he became aware of his exhaustion. The pain in his right side had localized itself along his ribs and every breath he took was a new ache.

Spots of black and white were dancing before his eyes when the small boat pulled alongside of him. He hardly felt the strong arms that pulled him from the water and lifted him over into the boat. For a long, sweet moment he relaxed completely, breathing heavily and deeply in spite of the pain.

But by the time the boat reached the sub he had recovered enough strength to crawl to his feet and clamber onto its deck without assistance. He felt a queer pride in doing this. Though desperately weak, he straightened and stared levelly at the German seamen who were regarding him curiously. With deep stubbornness he wanted them to know that he was ship-shape and right.

He heard a sudden, sharp cry from one of the sailors at the opposite rail and turning, he saw the searchlight flashing again in widening circles over the black water. The seamen at the side of the sub, he saw, were preparing to launch the small rowboat again.

Brick started to cross the deck to see what was going on, but a German seaman took him by the arm and pointed to the conning tower.

"It is best you go below," he said in halting English. The man's voice was gruffly impersonal, but Brick could sense a halting sympathy in it.

He was too weary to argue. He stumbled to the conning tower and an officer helped him down the narrow steel ladder that led to the depths of the sub. Vaguely Brick realized that he was seated on a stool and his water soaked windbreaker had been removed.

Later, as his head cleared, he saw more men climbing down the iron ladder. Reaching the bottom they received a small, soggy body handed down to them. Two of them stretched the body on the floor and another seaman went to work on it with artificial respiration.

Brick shook his head and climbed to his feet. There was something disturbingly familiar about that huddled figure on the floor. He took several unsteady steps toward the small knot of men, and then one of them moved and he got a look at the face of the man on whom they were working.

It wasn't logical that he should have been so shocked, but his legs almost collapsed as he recognized the pale,

pinched features of his shipmate, Pop Carter.

He dropped to his knees beside the little man's inert figure.

"Is he—has he got a chance?" he demanded hoarsely to the men who were working over him.

As if in direct answer to his question the small, soaked figure on the floor stirred weakly. Brick watched tensely as the old fellow's bright little eyes opened and stared up at him. For a moment his face was blank, but then recognition dawned, and a faint flash of ire glinted in his eyes.

"Dang it!" he wheezed. "I told you to get below. Now get movin' before I—I—I—"

His voice trailed off weakly. His eyes closed again but a faint flutter of color was showing in the tough little man's leathery cheeks.

SOMEHOW, Pop's presence acted like a tonic to Brick. Except for the dull pain in his right side he was feeling considerably better. Strength was flooding into his healthy, well-muscled body and his head was clearing rapidly. Though still weak and tired, he was feeling more himself every minute.

He stood up and the German who had spoken to him on the deck stepped to his side.

"Please," he said, "will you come with me? The captain wishes to see you."

"Okay," Brick shrugged. He started to leave, but stopped and glanced back uncertainly at Pop's still figure.

The German guessed his anxiety.

"Your comrade will be in good care," he said earnestly. "Everything he needs will be provided for him."

Reassured, Brick followed the German through the narrow ship to a small gray door which was closed. The German opened the door and saluted smartly.

"The American," he said stiffly.

"By all means bring him in," a smooth, cultured voice answered from the room.

Obeying a nod from the German, Brick stepped into the room. He heard the door click behind him silently.

Standing behind a desk in the middle of the room, Brick saw a tall, dark-haired man in an officer's uniform regarding him. There was silence for an instant as the eyes of the two men locked and held with an almost physical force.

Brick noticed fleetingly the hard features, the thin black mustache and the arrogant bearing of the German officer. Then his gaze flicked back to the German's eyes, light blue and as cold as sunlight on snow, mirroring the nature of the man behind them.

They were the reflections of a ruthless, dangerous mind and will. Flint-like in their hardness, chilling in their coldness, they pierced Brick like twin lances of deadly flame.

It was the German officer who broke the strained silence.

"I am Captain Von Herrman," he said. Brick noticed again the flawless, precise pronunciation, the clipped, metallic voice. "I picked you up because I think you may have information I can use. If you are sensible you will cooperate with me. However I don't expect your answer now. You may have time to think it over."

Brick's hands tightened into fists, but there was the flicker of a humorless smile on his lips as he said.

"I wouldn't think of keeping you waiting. You can have my answer right now. Go to hell!"

The Captain shrugged.

"You are bitter, perhaps. You are still thinking of the sinking of your

ship. I would advise you to forget such things. They are part of the past. They are over and done with and nothing you or I can do will change them."

"I am not thinking so much of the sinking of the ship," Brick said coldly, "as the method used in sinking it."

The captain smiled, displaying strong even teeth.

"You Americans are too idealistic. You play at war as if it were some school game. You let your sympathies rule your head. The world today has no room in it for boy scouts."

"Perhaps room will be made," Brick said softly.

"That will be difficult to do," the captain said. "More difficult than you know. You have been attempting it and how far have you progressed? The convoy you were supposed to be protecting was destined for Britain. How much good will it do them at the bottom of the ocean?"

A buzzer sounded suddenly in the room as the captain finished speaking. He stepped quickly to the wall and lifted a communication hose from a hook on the wall.

"Ja?" he snapped curtly.

He listened for a few seconds and Brick saw an anxious frown spreading over his hard features. For another interval he listened and then he spoke one tense, electric word into the mouthpiece.

"Tauchen!" Submerge!

HE replaced the hose with a savage gesture and strode to his desk.

"Our little discussion must be postponed," he snapped. "Two enemy destroyers have evidently picked up our vibrations. They are closing in under full steam."

Brick felt a slight shift under his feet as the sub tilted downward. The captain seated himself at the desk and was intently studying the charts and current indicators spread before him.

Brick knew destroyer tactics and he felt a grim exultation sweeping through him. Once they picked up a sub's vibrations it was generally curtains for the undersea craft. Tons of depth bombs would be the opening phase of the battle. Then the sleek destroyers would flash through the water like sharks on the trail of blood, watching for the ominous signs of air bubbles and oil that indicated their charges had scored.

But their great advantage lay in the sub's necessity to rise to the surface for oxygen within a time limit. The destroyers could play a waiting game. The subs could not. They must get to their bases or rise for air. They couldn't do either as long as a destroyer was on their trail.*

"You haven't got a chance," Brick said grimly.

The captain glanced up briefly from his charts. There was a cold, mocking light in his eyes.

"Your stupid American optimism is annoying even though there is a logical basis for it. We are in danger now, but in a few minutes I can promise you we will be out of it."

"You're whistling in the dark," Brick said, grinning, "You're a thousand miles from your closest base, and you'll soon be out of oil and oxygen."

"Your calculations are off," the Cap-

*This is the case when destroyers go on a hunt for submarines, but in a convoy, the menace to an undersea boat is less, because the sub can, and does, submerge and lie quiescent until the convoy and destroyers are past. Then it can resume its voyage. However, when a sub is picked up by a convoy boat, its location can very swiftly be plotted, and by sweeping back and forth over the area, dropping depth charges, it is quite possible that the sub is doomed. A depth charge does not have to hit a submarine, but merely explode nearby. The concussion in the water does the rest.—Ed.

tain snapped. "We are closer to our base than you imagine."

Brick started to reply but an imperative clamor of the buzzer interrupted him.

He watched the captain step quickly to the wall, remove the ear phone with a quick motion.

And then it happened!

The floor beneath him jerked spasmodically and a thunderous reverberation throbbed in his ears. Stunned by the impact of sound he found himself sprawled on the floor, head ringing. His side, which he had momentarily forgotten, was aching again as he crawled to his knees.

Following the first blast of sound came an almost continual rumble of explosions in quick succession that jarred the sub with sledge-hammer blows.

Delicate wall instruments rattled and crashed to the floor as the craft shuddered under each successive impact. Brick saw that the captain had struggled to his feet and was barking frantic orders into the communication hose.

Under his feet Brick felt the floor shift to a steeper angle as the sub pointed downward.

BRICK crawled to his feet, holding his breath against the pain the movement caused. The steep angle of the floor held, and minute after minute ticked off in silence. The rumble of the depth bombs was changing to a faint sound, above them and off to their leeward side.

Then he felt the floor beneath him level itself out. It was no longer necessary to brace himself against the wall to maintain his balance. He glanced at the captain and saw that he was smiling coldly.

"In spite of your expectations to the contrary," the Nazi said in his clipped, sarcastic voice, "the danger is past. Your stupid destroyers will chase about for a few days like dogs after their own tails, then they will boast of the sinking of another German submarine."

Brick remained silent. The captain's confidence was genuine, he felt sure, but it puzzled him.

He felt, or thought he felt, a slight jar travel the length of the sub. He couldn't be sure for there was a strange lightness in his head that was making thinking a difficult job. The pain in his side had subsided again to a dull throbbing ache.

"We are docked, " he heard the captain's voice as if from a great distance.

Brick shook his head in an effort to clear the white mists.

"I don't understand," he muttered thickly. "Where are we?"

The captain drew himself erect, his eyes lighting with a cold flame.

"Atlantis," he said. There was a pride in his voice that was almost exultation.

Brick tried to laugh, but no sound came from his throat. Atlantis! The continent that had sunk thousands of years ago. Now he knew this was all a wild, crazy nightmare.

Then something struck him a blunt blow in the face and chest and when he tried to lift his arms he found that he had fallen to the floor. Before he could figure out this surprising development a wave of dirty black spilled over him, smothering him. . .

CHAPTER III

Atlantis!

POP Carter stared at the still figure on the cot anxiously. His round, red face was wrinkled worriedly and his gnarled, blunt fingers were twisted

together in something very like entreaty.

Long slow minutes passed and then the figure on the cot stirred restlessly.

Pop leaned forward in sudden anxiety.

"Brick, boy," he whispered pleadingly.

Brick opened his eyes slowly, painfully. It was like coming up from black silent water or walking from darkness into a brightly lighted room. He blinked his eyes and managed to focus them on Pop's worried, wrinkled face.

"Are you feeling all right, lad?" Pop asked urgently.

Brick hesitated a bit before replying. He felt fairly well except for the constricting tightness about his chest. Moving his hands under the light covering he discovered that his torso was bound closely with adhesive tape and bandages. Breathing was somewhat difficult, but his head was clear and his arms and legs felt strong and rested.

"Why shouldn't I be?" he asked with a weak grin.

"No reason except you've been out like a light for thirty-six hours, got about three cracked ribs and had the krauthead sawbones wondering if you were goin' to pull through at all."

"Thirty-six hours," Brick muttered, dazed. "I must've pulled a weak sister act at that." He raised himself on one elbow and ran a hand through his tousled, fiery hair. A glance about showed a small, frugally furnished room with two bunks, two chairs and one door with a barred window.

"This the brig?" he asked.

"Nothin' but," Pop snapped. "And we're in for the duration."

Brick started to speak but Pop leaned close to him and said:

"Lemme do the talking for a minute." He shot a quick glance at the door, then turned back to Brick. "This is worse than a brig. It's a German sub base, a whopping big one, built right on the floor of the ocean. They've got subs by the hundreds docked here and enough men to run 'em. It's the reason why the British have been losing about two of every three ships they operate on the Atlantic.* And I think they're gettin' ready to turn these subs loose on American supply ships. This Captain Herrman is about the toughest and coolest thug I've ever run into. But I've got a plan—"

"Slow down a minute," Brick begged. "I'm getting dizzy."

His mind flashed back to the events of his last conscious hours. The sinking of the *Vulcan,* the rescue of the German sub, the escape from the British destroyers and finally the captain's incredible statement that they were docked at a German base in the mythical continent of Atlantis.

Whether this last was true was highly debatable, but the sub base *did* exist, constituting a terrible menace to all American Atlantic shipping. That much was definite. The only clear fact in the bewildering chain of circumstance was that America's men and material were in immediate danger.

Pop's voice broke into his thought, tense and cautious.

"We got a chance to throw a monkey wrench into their works. The guard outside steps into the cell when the flunkey brings the food. He wears two guns, but he keeps his eyes on me all the time cause he's used to you lyin' there like a dead man."

Brick's eyes glinted as his mind raced ahead of Pop's.

"I see," he said softly. "You ma-

*Shortly after the Lend-lease program got underway, British officials revealed to American officials the real truth of losses in the Atlantic. For a time, debate was hot in the Senate, because it was claimed Britain was "angling" for actual convoys and the losses were not true.—Ed.

neuver him to turn his back to me and I'll play possum. Then when he gets close enough to the cot I'll let him have it."

AN hour later a surprised guard was seized from behind by a pair of steel-hard arms, hurled to the floor and his guns whipped from their holsters.

Pop in turn slugged the gaping white-coated man who brought the food into the cell and the first phase of the plan had worked beautifully.

While Brick held a gun at the guard's neck, Pop tied his hands and feet with their two belts.

"The corridor is clear," he grunted. "All we got to do is get to the powder room at the end of it. It's only a hundred feet away. Then we'll finish this place for good."

Brick slipped into his trousers and, barefooted and shirtless, followed Pop stealthily into the corridor.

Moving swiftly they stole past unbarred doors on either side of the corridor until they reached an intersection where another tunnel-like corridor right-angled their own.

The walls and ceilings of the corridors were of heavy, reinforced concrete and were brightly illuminated by powerful lights set at intervals of every six feet in the ceiling.

The second corridor was deserted and quiet. Everything was proceeding smoothly. Too smoothly, Brick thought worriedly. This suspicion brought hackles of his skin up warningly, but it came too late to do them any good.

"Looking for someone?" a cold, mocking voice inquired from behind them.

Brick wheeled. Captain Von Herrman stood in the corridor, a cigarette drifting smoke up past the sardonic twist of his lips. He had obviously stepped from one of the rooms they'd passed.

Brick's fingers tightened on the gun in his hand, but the captain raised a thin hand deprecatingly.

"They're not loaded," he said calmly. "It was just a little clinical test of mine to see if you were going to be sensible. I instructed the guard to give you an opportunity to overpower him. Of course I wasn't foolish enough to put loaded guns into your hands."

Brick stared helplessly at the gun in his hand, a dull feeling of defeat stealing over him.

"After this," the captain went on imperturbably, "we will have to be more careful with both of you. I thought for a while of giving you your freedom here in return for such information of America which you might happen to possess. Now you will be confined indefinitely."

As if that word were a signal of some sort a number of doors opened along the corridor and a dozen grinning German seamen piled out.

"I took additional precautions," the captain pointed out. "Now you will be shown your new quarters. Since we realize that we are harboring dangerous and resourceful Americans, we must be very careful. Very, very careful."

His broad sarcasm brought grins to the faces of the German seamen.

Pop threw his gun to the floor bitterly.

"If I had a minute alone with you," he fumed, "I'd—"

"You'd regret it exceedingly," the captain said coldly.

BRICK was silent as they were led to their new quarters. It proved to be a larger room with a small lavatory connecting. But the door and walls were plated with steel sheeting and the bars were several times thicker than the ones in their former cell.

"I hope you'll be comfortable here,"

the captain grinned, "because it looks as if your stay is going to be a long one."

"By that," Brick said, "you mean the war will be a long one."

"Long enough to accomplish its purpose," the captain said, "and no longer. When the world is willing to admit the superiority of the German people and grant them their ordained position in the ruling of the world, then, and then only, will the war cease."

"Supposing," Brick said, "the people of the world decide *not* to admit the superiority of the Germans. Supposing they'd rather rule themselves than be enslaved to a gang of power-drunk fanatics. What then?"

A hot flash of anger reddened the captain's face. One of the guards in the cell stepped menacingly toward Brick, but the captain checked him with a motion of his hand.

"You're safe in your insolence," he said coldly, "because you happen to be defenseless and injured."

"That hasn't stood in the way of your armies," Brick snapped. "They've never displayed any noticeable scruples about attacking nations half their size."

The captain's anger was under check now, and a frosty gleam of sardonic amusement played in his eyes. "The idealistic American again," he jeered. "If you had an ounce of intelligence you'd realize that such things are necessary to the creation of a new order. For years we have been laying the ground work for our military machine and if tiny, undefended nations are impudent enough to attempt resistance they must pay the price for their folly.

"This submarine base is an excellent example of our invincibility and thoroughness. Equipped now for a thousand ships, soon it will hold *ten* thousand. The British are laughing at the fleets of pocket submarines we are constructing because they know their cruising range to be less than fifty miles. But stationed at this base a submarine needs only a cruising range of five miles to operate at maximum destructive efficiency.*

"We have barely tapped the potentialities of submarine warfare. In this base with its limitless unexplored possibilities we will create a fleet of such strength that no nation in the world will venture its ships on the Atlantic without our authority."

The impact of the captain's words was almost physical. Brick thought of the thousands of American seamen who would be steaming into the Atlantic lanes, secure in the belief that the British had the German submarine menace throttled with their destroyer blockade of Northern ports and bases.

Even as the horror of this swept over him he was able to wonder, with a curious detachment, why the force of this German base had not been unleased before on the stream of American ships carrying supplies to Britain. What motive did they have for holding back, practically encouraging America by their passivity to take still greater risks and send more and greater convoys into the Atlantic?

The captain's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"For years we have been working

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* Early in 1941 it was reported that the Nazis were preparing a vast submarine campaign, and were constructing hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of undersea boats. For a time, Germany launched its entire submarine fleet at convoys off Scotland, and in the North Sea, and off Gibraltar, and losses were terrible. Yet, these were the giant subs of the Nazi fleet, and they were soon recalled. When the British heard of the pocket-subs, with their meagre cruising radius, they scoffed, because it was obvious that they were only coastal craft, and could constitute no menace in the Atlantic. But they did not suspect that these craft were intended for a base far at sea, and under it!—Ed.

secretly in the development of this base. Pumping out the halls of one of the ancient cities of Atlantis to create harbors and locks for our fleet. Now that job is over, but we have not as yet utilized many of the vast unexplored regions of Atlantis. Even so we are ready now to wage the war that will win us the final victory in the battle of the Atlantic."

Before Brick could reply a guttural German voice blasted into the room, seeming literally to fill it with its volume. The voice seemed to emanate above him, and glancing up he saw a loud speaker. The voice continued on for perhaps thirty seconds and then, abruptly, it stopped. Brick didn't understand German, but it was apparent from the inflection of the speaker that some announcement had been made.

A tense, pregnant silence followed.

The captain and the four guards stood rigidly at attention, right arms outthrust in the Nazi salute.

"What is it?" Brick asked, puzzled.

"*Der Fuehrer!*" the Captain barked. "Quiet!"

CHAPTER IV

THE silence held for perhaps another minute. The only sound in the room was the breathing of the men. Pop stuck his hands in his pocket and leaned against the wall. With elaborate indifference he cleared his throat and spat contemptuously on the floor.

Brick seated himself on the cot and waited.

Within a few seconds the silence was shattered by a high strident voice. For the next ten minutes the voice drowned out all sound in the room, its pitch alternating from a screaming crescendo down to a hoarse fanatical whisper.

The captain and the guards remained at statuesque attention, their faces shining and triumphant as the dominating voice of Hitler blasted through the loud speaker.

Then, suddenly, it was all over. The echoes of the voice died in the room and the arms of the Germans dropped to their sides.

The captain turned a flushed face to Brick.

"The warning to our enemies has been repeated," he said gloatingly. "Indo-China has fallen to our loyal ally, Japan. French Dakar but 1300 miles from the Western Hemisphere is in our hands. Our friends in South America have not been inactive. Brazil is ready to receive us. Outposts such as the Philippines and the Cape Verde Islands will soon be welded into the chain of encirclement our *Fuehrer* is forging. A gigantic pincer movement is developing, but some nations are still too stupid to recognize its outlines."

"You're forgetting the U.S. Navy," Brick said grimly. "Also you're overlooking the British fleet."

The captain smiled. One of the guards laughed outright.

"Oh, no," the captain said sarcastically. "We wouldn't be so impolite as that. Our plans include them too. We wouldn't slight them for the world."

He moved to the door, then turned and smiled at Brick.

"It is a pity you do not understand German," he said mockingly. "If you did you wouldn't be so rude as to accuse us of neglecting the great navies of America and Britain."

With a sarcastic bow he stepped through the door, followed by the four guards. They were all smiling broadly.

Then the door slammed behind them and Brick and Pop were alone.

"What's the joke?" Pop demanded belligerently.

"I wish I knew," Brick said worried-

ly. "The only thing I'm sure of is that there's nothing funny about it."

Pop stamped across the room and sat down on the other bunk.

"We got to get out of here," he said fiercely. "Got to do something about this set-up."

Brick buried his face wearily in his hands. Despair was a strange emotion to him but it was creeping over him now. It was maddening to sit helplessly by while his country faced a menace that was so horrible in its potentialities. There had been a vicious threat behind the captain's suave references to the British and American fleets. But what kind of a threat? What trap was being rigged and baited for them?

Even if he knew all the details, what could he do? How could he warn them? The two of them were pitifully insignificant against the might of manpower the Germans had available at the base.

Their efforts would be about as effective as pebbles thrown at a battleship. That was the maddening thing. They were so completely, utterly helpless.

"Well?" Pop demanded. "What are we going to do?"

BRICK lifted his head from his hands. His gray eyes were as hard as sunlight on burnished steel.

"I don't know yet," he said softly. "But we're going to make one helluva try before we give up."

"Atta keed," Pop crowed.

They examined their rooms thoroughly. Even the small lavatory was painstakingly scoured, but they were forced to admit that any escape from this cell was practically impossible.

The next day, and the days that followed, they memorized the time of the arrival of their meals. They were served three times a day, plentifully. But two guards stood in the room with guns drawn while they ate. The utensils given them were carefully removed after they had eaten. They cleaned their own cell, made their own beds. Their only contact with the men of the base was at meal time when they were served by a surly, gnome-like fellow in a white uniform, and closely watched by the two guards.

The monotony of the routine was practically unbearable. But worse than that was their feeling of complete futility and helplessness. They knew from various indications that something big was approaching. The tension was apparent in the faces of their guards, in the sounds of riveting and hammering that kept up twenty-four hours straight. The entire base was preparing itself.

But for what?

"I'm goin' bats," Pop snapped for the dozenth time. "Lemme tell you, these krautheads are up to something. I can smell it in the air."

That day Hitler spoke again. There seemed to be an additionally frenzied quality even in his voice. For fifteen minutes he spoke, dramatically and frantically.

"Blasted madman," Pop muttered. "Can't even talk English like a civilized person. Besides, he said all this before. I'm sorry I understand the language!"

Brick grinned, but as he listened to the shrill, fanatically determined voice flooding through the room, his smile faded. There was nothing funny about Hitler. Hitler was very, very unfunny.

He thought of the thousands of men throughout the huge base standing rigidly at attention, listening to his every syllable as if it were originating from God himself.

It was then that the idea crawled into the back of his head.

It was a germ of a thought at first as whimsically fantastic as anything he could imagine. For a few seconds he

toyed with it idly, carelessly. Then he forgot about it.

But in a few minutes it was back, sticking persistently and doggedly in his mind. He turned the idea over then, exploring its possibilities. Or rather its impossibilities.

It was hopelessly absurd. To risk two lives on anything so flimsy and uncertain was almost as ridiculous as the idea itself.

He swung his legs off the cot and began pacing worriedly.

"What's the matter?" Pop asked.

"Nothing," he said, "Nothing at all."

"Spill it," Pop said quietly.

Brick continued to pace the room in silence. Finally he said:

"It's a screwy idea that just hit me. It's crazy as hell, but it won't go away." He paused for an instant, then walked quietly to the barred door and peered into the corridor. Satisfied he stepped back to Pop. "It's something that might spring us out of this cell, at least."

POP reacted excitedly. He sprang to his feet and grabbed his arm.

"Are you kidding?" he demanded fiercely.

"I was never more serious in my life," Brick said quietly.

"Then what're we waiting for?"

"It's a thousand to one shot," Brick answered.

"I never knew you to figure odds before," Pop said hotly.

Brick sat down on his cot and stared at the floor.

"I'm not worrying about us," he said. "It's just that if we fail this time we'll never get another chance. I'm trying to make sure that this scheme of mine is the only chance we've got."

"Well stop being mysterious," Pop said irritably. "Lemme in on it."

Brick told him in detail. When he finished Pop scratched his head in silence, and frowned darkly at the floor.

"It's crazy," he said at last. "But sometimes the crazier a thing seems to be the better it works. I'm for it. Hell, it's a chance, a dang slim one, but we can't expect meat in our soup at this stage of the game."

Brick stood up decisively. He picked up the rolled blanket from the foot of his cot and handed it to Pop.

"You know what to do with this. Hide it in the wash room though until we're ready for it. We're goin' to take that thousand to one chance."

Pop grinned delightedly and hurried to the lavatory with the blanket. When he returned he was still smiling.

"If it works," he chortled, "it'll take twenty years off my life."

"If it doesn't," Brick said grimly, "neither of us will have to worry about collecting old age pensions."

"You're a pessimist," Pop said scornfully, "but I ain't. I just got the feeling that I'll be standing watch again with a good U.S. deck under me before long. They can't stop us. Hell, we're Americans."

"I hope you're right," Brick said briefly. "Anyway we'll know soon enough. It's about time for dinner. During the meal you make some excuse to get into the washroom. Then if everything works right I'll handle the rest."

"It ain't goin' to be a snap for you," Pop said. "There's two of em, you know. And the sour little guy who serves the food to boot."

For the next few minutes the men were silent, tensely awaiting the tread of boots in the corridor.

When the sound came it was a relief. As the measured stamp came closer Brick felt his taut nerves relaxing. He slumped back in his cot and closed his eyes. His muscles were loose and free,

his breathing regular. Except for the pain which still bothered his ribs, he was in pefect shape.

Pop's face was impassive but his blunt fingers were trembling slightly with excitement. He jammed his hands into the pockets of his dungarees to hide their perturbation.

THE two men were apparently resting easily when the lock clicked and the two guards entered. The German guards were heavy-set and capable-looking in their blue-grey uniforms. Their faces were stern and watchful as they stepped aside to allow the orderly to enter with the tray.

Brick opened his eyes, blinked, and then sat up yawning sleepily.

"I was just about to yell for you guys," he muttered, "I'm hungry as a lumberjack."

The tray was set on a small table in the center of the cell and Pop pulled up his chair and began eating.

One of the guards, Brick noticed, had his gun in his hand, but the other wore his in the holster at his hip. They kicked the door shut and took up their positions, one on either side of it.

Brick appraised their location and attitudes carefully before joining Pop at the table. He kept his eyes on the plate rather than risk a glance at Pop that might give away the excitement and hope that boiled within him.

Halfway through the meal Pop suddenly clutched at his stomach. With a moan of pain he staggered to his feet his face twisted in a grimace of agony.

The German guards watched him with stoic suspicion, but when he hugged his arms to his stomach and stumbled weakly toward the lavatory they made no move to stop him.

Brick slowly released the breath he had been holding.

If the guards had stopped him, or insisted on following him, their apple-cart would have been neatly kicked over. But they hadn't.

Without attracting attention Brick managed to slide his chair back a few inches to give his knees clearance from the table. His feet twisted slightly as he braced himself for quick action.

Outwardly he was calm, almost sleepy looking. But every muscle of his powerful body was coiled to strike and behind his expressionless face his brain was racing keenly and swiftly.

Timing was all important. A tenth of a second one way or the other would mean the difference between success and failure, life and death.

With a vicious effort of will he drove all thoughts of failure from his mind. He couldn't fail. To avoid suspicion he forced himself to raise his fork again to his mouth.

The fork was halfway to his lips when an incoherent, screaming voice blasted through the room. It was the voice of a madman, raging and shouting a stream of incomprehensible words and phrases. For a dazed second, as the frenzied, but stangely muffled sounds crashed through the room, the German guards stared in helpless bewilderment about them.

Brick crouched at the table, his muscles gathering and bunching. His slate gray eyes were on the guards unwinkingly.

For another chaotic second the guards hesitated as the maniacal sounds poured into the room. Then with an automatic motion they stiffened to rigid attention, their hands snapping outward in the Nazi salute.

"Der Fuehrer!" one gasped.

BRICK moved then! With a tigerish motion he wheeled and charged the guards. The one with the gun in his hand cried out in surprised rage,

but he was too late to use the gun. Brick's shoulder slammed him against the concrete wall and his right fist drove into the Nazi's middle with the force of a battering ram.

With an agonized cry the man slumped to the floor, his eyes rolling wildly as he clutched at his stomach.

Brick jerked around but the other guard was already on top of him his big fists slamming into his head and shoulders.

Brick weaved backward, snapping his left into the guard's enraged face. The German was big and powerful, with heavy shoulders that looked dangerous.

Cursing he followed Brick, his arms pumping punches like well-oiled pistons. Brick backed away, waiting for an opening. If it hadn't been for the aching pain in his chest he would have slugged it out, toe-to-toe, but he couldn't take any chances now.

Confident and careless the German dropped his arms and rushed Brick, hoping for a chance to grapple with the elusive American.

Brick stabbed a left into his face and stepped in suddenly, his right chopping down in an axe-like blow that exploded against the German's exposed jaw with a sickening *smack!* It was a terrible blow, almost enough to kill an ordinary man. The German staggered back, eyes glazing, his jaw hanging queerly.

Brick moved into follow up, but it wasn't necessary. The German sprawled backward to the floor, out cold.

Brick wheeled—and his hands rose into the air.

The orderly was facing him, a Luger pistol clutched in his fist. He was standing in front of the wash-room door, face working excitedly. For that reason he didn't see the door open, didn't see Pop's roundhouse blow coming.

The first knowledge he had of it, was when something like a sixteen inch shell crashed into the back of his neck exploding a complete constellation of stars before his eyes. He hit the floor and crumpled up like a sack of meal.

"In the well-known nick of time," Brick panted.

Pop's face was flushed triumphantly.

"The first round is ours," he grinned. "Tell me lad? Did I really sound like Adolf, himself? My German is awful."

"Close enough," Brick said. "With that blanket over your head disguising your voice I almost started goose stepping myself. Now aren't you glad you know German?"

Pop stepped quickly to the guards and orderly and picked up their guns. He tossed one to Brick.

"Let's get movin'," he snapped. "We can't wait to tie these lugs up."

Brick stuck the gun in his belt and stepped to the door. One cautious glance showed the corridor still to be empty.

"Let's move," he said grimly.

Together they crept silently down the hall.

THEIR greatest handicap was in their total unfamiliarity with the layout of the base. Then there were the lights, glaring brightly at all hours, ruining any chance or attempt at concealment.

The corridor they were using was wide and deserted. They passed other doors, some barred and some of solid steel.

Within a hundred yards Brick heard a faint throbbing sound growing in volume. He had noticed it subconsciously when he had left the cell but now its sound was all around them,

like the pulse of a mighty heart.

It must mean they were nearing the region that housed the dynamos. As they passed intersecting corridors Brick began to gain a mental picture of the base. The docks and operating machinery would probably be centrally located, and it would be logical that the officers' quarters would be close to them. Then the main corridors angled away from this hub like the spokes of a huge wheel. The corridors they were intersecting were probably circular in shape, spreading out in gradually widening rings from the center or hub of the base.

He noticed an increasing smell of oil in the warm air that further convinced him they were heading right for the center of the base. Nothing could be better. If they were going to accomplish anything in the way of delaying or destroying its workings, they would have to strike at its heart.

"Let's take a side tunnel," Brick suggested. It had occurred to him that if the guards they had slugged stumbled out of the cell, he and Pop would be instantly visible to them.

They turned off at the next corridor, moving swiftly, but cautiously.

Not a second too soon—

A hoarse cry sounded behind them, echoing loudly and clamorously through the tunnel-like corridors. Brick and Pop looked at one another apprehensively.

A second later they heard the sound of running footsteps and shouted cries. Due to the acoustical peculiarity of the low corridors it was impossible to guess the origin of the sound. It seemed to break all around them, echoing up and down the length of the corridor.

Brick hesitated. There was nothing to guide them or give them an inkling which way to turn. Around every corner lay danger. There was no more time left for deliberation or reasoning.

"Come on," he snapped. "It's up to Lady Luck now."

With Pop panting behind him they charged ahead through two intersections of the larger corridors that led to the center of the base.

Their luck had been phenomenal so far, but they were helpless to take advantage of it. They were running blindly with no destination in mind.

THE glaringly illuminated corridors offered no place of concealment.

And their luck couldn't hold forever. Suddenly a new, but unmistakable sound joined the babel of footsteps and voices that were closing on them.

A muffled *crack!* sounded and Brick felt something hiss spitefully past his cheek. Jerking around he saw three Germans charging after them with drawn guns.

Fortunately the next intersection was but a few feet away. Reaching it, Brick grabbed Pop by the arm jerked him roughly out of the line of fire into the temporary shelter afforded by the angle of the corridor.

He pulled the Luger from his belt and fired two random shots at the oncoming Germans. It would slow them down he knew, give them a few seconds' start down the corridor in which they found themselves.

With Pop at his side, he sprinted ahead, but it was not until they had covered a hundred feet that they saw their mistake. For the corridor ended abruptly a hundred yards ahead of them. It was a dead end. Brick flicked a helpless glance over his shoulder. There was no turning back now. They were trapped without a chance in the world to save themselves.

He was still looking over his shoulder when he heard Pop's gun blast next to him. Turning he saw a German guard

clutching his wrist and cursing wildly.

"He just appeared out of thin air," Pop said grimly.

When they reached the man they saw that the corridor widened at its termination, forming a rectangular space which had concealed the sentry from their sight.

Brick disarmed the guard swiftly. Then Pop was gripping his arm.

"Look!" he cried, pointing.

Brick followed his hand and saw that he was indicating the dead end of the corridor. Then he saw the reason for Pop's excitement. It wasn't a dead end, but a huge bronze door that blocked off the tunnel.

Pop was already springing for the massive handle of the door, and Brick, with a slight twinge of conscience, jerked the guard around and slugged him in the jaw with a vicious eight-inch right.

The German slumped in his arms with a sodden limp weight. Brick eased him to the floor and jumped to Pop's side. Tenths of seconds counted now.

Pop turned the latch of the door and with Brick's help they jerked it open wide enough to slip through. A half dozen shots spattered viciously against the bronze of the door as they slammed it shut behind them. An automatic bolt clicked.

Brick wheeled, stopped dead in his tracks. His eyes widened incredulously as they traveled over the unbelievable scene spreading before him.

"Jeez!" Pop gasped hoarsely. "I—It ain't *real,* is it?"

CHAPTER V

In Atlantis

FOR a timeless instant they stared in mute wonder at the vastness and majesty of the room.

It was long and wide with an arched ceiling that sprang upward hundreds of feet in the air. The walls and floor were composed of some substance that gleamed like chalk-white marble. From the ceiling a soft, mellow luminance emanated, flooding the vast chamber with a radiant brilliance. The room was starkly empty, but it was this very emptiness that emphasized its breath-taking size and simplicity.

An archway sloped down at the far end of the room, forming a corridor which led to another room, apparently identical with the one in which they were standing.

Brick was the first to recover from the shock.

"We've got to keep moving," he said. "This must be the unexplored region of Atlantis the captain mentioned."

He mentioned Atlantis for the first time with complete credulity in his voice. It was impossible *not* to admit its existence when gazing at these magnificent white rooms completely unlike any architecture he had ever viewed.

It was somewhat terrifying to realize, to accept the fact that he was standing in the halls of a race that had died twelve thousand years ago. A race whose memory was only a series of scattered legends and folk tales.

Pop was still staring dumbly over the vast hall.

"I don't believe it," he said weakly.

Brick flashed a grim look at the bronze door as a faint muffled sound came to him.

"Let's go," he hissed. "Our chums are just on the other side of that door."

There was only one direction to run, and that was straight ahead through the large hall to the connecting archway, and then into the mysterious, unexplored caverns of ancient Atlantis.

Brick flung a glance over his shoul-

der as they reached the archway that connected with the next room. The bronze door that separated them from the Germans was sagging inward at a drunken angle as they smashed into it with some sort of battering ram.

They had covered the length of the second room before a crackling volley of shots told them that the Germans had broken through and were hot on their trail.

Brick leaped to one side, into a passageway that connected with the second room. From the protective angle of the wall he reached out and dragged Pop in after him. But he wasn't soon enough.

Pop stumbled and dropped to his knees, his hand clutching his shoulder. His face was twisted into an agonized mask, but no sound came through his locked jaw.

BRICK hauled him to his feet, as carefully as he could. He pulled Pop's hand away from the wound, saw that the bullet had bored through the flesh alongside the collarbone. Blood was welling from the small black hole, but it didn't look as if a bone had been hit.

"I'm a long way from dead," Pop said grimly. "Let's get movin'."

Brick glanced about, deciding swiftly. The passageway they were in was narrow and brightly lighted. It extended endlessly straight ahead of them. They would be as visible as shooting gallery ducks if they followed it, but there was no other course.

"Come on, sailor," he snapped.

Together they charged down the passage. The only sound for awhile was the pounding of their feet on the hard floor and their noisy, labored breathing in their ears. But within a hundred yards they heard the excited shout they had been expecting. Twisting about, Brick saw that the Germans had reached the intersection, had spotted them.

Their situation was hopeless he knew, but something in him refused to quit. Pop was staggering along, obviously weakening from the loss of blood. He turned a desperate face to Brick.

"You keep goin'," he wheezed. "I—I'll try and hold 'em for awhile."

Brick hooked an arm about Pop's waist to keep him from falling.

"The hell you will," he grated. "We go together or not at all."

The Germans weren't shooting. Evidently they realized that their quarry was helpless and had decided to capture them alive.

For another fifty feet Brick lunged on, almost carrying Pop's limp figure with his right arm. He could hear the Germans closing behind him, and he knew in seconds it would be over. But he kept on.

Then, through the mist of sweat streaming into his eyes, he saw a narrow dark opening in the bright, white wall. It was a few feet wide, but it stretched from the floor to the ceiling.

He was beyond deliberating or reasoning. Instinctively his tired legs drove toward the dark sanctuary. As he lunged into the passageway, a merciful, concealing blackness cloaked him. He dropped to his knees and eased Pop to the floor.

He heard a sudden rattle of gunfire, and bullets plowing past the mouth of the dark corridor with a deadly *hiss*. Jerking the Luger from his pocket he fired hastily into the lighted corridor. The bullet struck the wall at an odd angle and he could tell from the startled yell of the German pursuers, that it had checked their reckless advance. But he knew the pause would only be temporary.

Crawling to his feet, he hoisted Pop

up and headed into the darkness. For fifty feet the corridor continued straight ahead and then he collided with a solid wall. Groping with his free hand he discovered that the tunnel connected with another which stretched to the left.

Half carrying, half dragging Pop, he moved cautiously along the new tunnel for perhaps a hundred feet before he encountered another turn. He made more turns after that. How many he couldn't tell. Through the clammy blackness of the labyrinthine passages, he plodded on, interested only in putting distance between themselves and their pursuers.

For minutes the only sound that broke the deep silence was the tired scuff of their boots; but dimly at first, and then with steadily increasing volume, he heard muffled cries echoing about him. It was difficult to locate exactly where they were emanating, but there was little doubt as to the possessers of the voices. The harsh guttural tones told him all too plainly that the Germans were following him into the black twisting corridor.

Again, he collided with a solid substance. Extending his hand to the left he touched another wall. Turning right he lurched ahead—and stopped short, colliding again. For an instant he was unable to comprehend the situation. He groped about a semi-circle touching each wall again. It was only then that he realized they were helplessly trapped against a dead end in the black passageway.

THE silence was complete. His breathing sounded terribly loud and ragged in his ears. Behind him, faintly came the sound of shod feet moving cautiously. The hunters were closing in for the kill.

Pop had been leaning against the wall that blocked the tunnel, and now he grabbed Brick's arm tensely.

"Look," he said weakly. His voice was faint, but there was a note of excitement in it. "Here in the wall. I just found a hole."

Brick dropped to his knees hurriedly, his hands moving over the surface of the stone. With Pop's hands to guide him, his fingers slipped into a narrow niche, about two inches wide and six inches long.

With his right hand he probed into the opening. His fingers met a cold hard surface that was like steel to the touch.

Frowning he sat back on his haunches. The niche had obviously been carved for some purpose, and its position, waist high on the wall, suggested a key hole of some sort.

Key? His mind turned the idea over. A wild, screwy idea occurred to him, but for an instant he wavered indecisively. Then his jaw hardened.

"Move aside, Pop," he whispered. "I'm going to fire a slug into this slit."

He jerked the Luger from his belt, shoved it into the niche and pulled the trigger. In the narrow confines of the tunnel the detonation was deafening. He heard the bullet *spang* into the metal-like plate in the crevice.

He heard nothing else. He listened closely but the silence was complete and final. Even the cautious advance of the Germans had stopped. It had been a crazy hunch, but he felt a curious letdown. Such as a drowning man might experience watching the last straw bob away on the waves.

A deep rumbling came from behind them, obliterating completely the slight sounds of the Germans' advance. It was as if the walls and ceiling had begun to vibrate crazily.

"Brick," Pop hissed imperatively. "Look! On the floor."

A thin pencil of pale light was spreading under their feet. A light that was like the illumination cast by a mellow candle. Incredulously Brick's eyes swung to the narrow crack from which the slender finger of light was emanating.

The heavy stone wall which had blocked the corridor was rising slowly, and from the steadily growing aperture the pale light was pouring.

"What in the name of the forty blue blazes!" Pop muttered feebly.

Brick rallied first.

"Come on," he snapped. "We're not licked yet. If we can get out of here before the Germans spot us we've got a chance."

When the aperture was three feet high, he ducked low and crawled under the slowly rising wall. Pop scrambled after, grunting painfully. They straightened up together. And together their mouths dropped open in blank, stunned amazement.

They stood in a small room furnished with nothing save a small couch against one wall. But it was not the room, or its pale illumination that shocked them into incredulous silence.

It was a girl!

A TALL slender girl dressed in a loose, white garment stood in the center of the room facing them. Her skin was as clear and as pale as fine white marble. Brilliant silver hair swept back from her high smooth brow and rippled over her head and down to her shoulders in long gleaming waves. The only color in the face was in the slight rose tint of her lips and in the dark welling pools of her eyes.

Brick let out his breath explosively. Never in his life had he seen such weird, exotic, completely compelling beauty.

There was a puzzled, uncertain expression on the girl's beautifully regular features. She took a hesitant step toward them, revealing in the motion the supple feminine curves of her lithe body.

Her startlingly dark eyes moved from one to the other, doubtfully, questioningly. Then she spoke. Her voice was low and clear and the words sounded like the gentle murmur of a quiet stream over mossy rocks.

"What's she sayin'?" Pop asked dazedly.

Brick shook his head.

"I don't get it. Sounds something like Polynesian but that's all I can make out."

Pop glanced behind him. The wall had stopped rising, revealing an opening about eight feet high and some six feet wide.

"We can't stop here," he said anxiously. "Them Germans ain't far away right now."

The girl looked at him as he spoke but there was no understanding in her face. Brick looked helplessly at her. In her haunting dark eyes there was an uncertainty and bewilderment that tugged at him powerfully.

But he had no more time to worry about that. For a harsh shout rang out from the blackness of the tunnel they had left, and simultaneously the deadly rattle of machine-gun fire shattered the silence into a million stuttering pieces. Steel jacketed bullets hissed through the tunnel opening and spattered spitefully against the far wall of the room.

The girl was almost in the direct line of fire. Pop hurled himself to the floor and scuttled crab-like to the protecting angle to the wall.

"Get down you fool," he shouted shrilly to Brick.

But Brick was springing toward the girl. He knew if he didn't get her

out of the way she would be cut down like a flower before a scythe by the vicious hail of lead. Reaching her side, he saw terror in her dark eyes. But strangely, there was understanding there too, as if she realized he meant to help her.

Her body was limp in his arms as he lifted her off her feet and sprang to the side of the room. Even in the bedlam of noise and danger he was conscious of her deep, liquid eyes on him.

The deafeningly loud rattle of machine-gun fire continued, the bullets lacing a criss-cross pattern of perforations against the wall. Finally it stopped and a guttural voice called out:

"Come out with your hands up please. We will give you till the count of ten. Then we will use grenades!"

Brick felt a cold perspiration break out on his face. One grenade in a room that small would blow them all into a million pieces. He glanced at Pop. The old man was crouched in a corner, white-faced.

Outside he could hear the slow methodical count.

"Four——Five——six——"

"Look!" Pop hissed suddenly. His finger was pointing excitedly at the side wall. Brick looked and saw a door, so perfectly fitted that it had been invisible, swinging open. Then, through the doorway, stepped a man.

A small, slender, gray-haired man with a keen, alert face and very dark eyes.

THE silver-haired girl at Brick's side leaped to her feet, a fervent exclamation escaping her lips. She ran to the side of the gray-haired man and embraced him. Swift, low words passed breathlessly between them.

"Eight——nine——

Brick sprang to his feet. There was only one second between them and eternity. He grabbed the silver-haired girl by the arms, spun her around. For a terrible, split second she stared at him bewilderedly; but then some of his desperation must have imparted itself to her, for she turned and with one swift word to the gray-haired man led the way to the door.

Brick leaped after her, Pop behind him. The gray headed man started to close the door.

"Ten!"

Brick hurled his shoulder against the door, slamming it shut. A muffled explosion sounded beyond it and he felt the door shudder under the impact. His shoulder ached at the jar, but he knew that for the time being they were safe.

CHAPTER VI

Leolo and Zoru

BRICK breathed a sigh of relief. While he realized the respite was only temporary, he had been so close to the brink of death that any delay was welcome. It would take the Germans a little time to discover that their bodies were not buried beneath the debris of the room they had just vacated.

He turned from the door, determined not to waste a second of their precious advantage. The gray-haired man had lost his air of uncertainty, he noticed. Now he was calm, deliberate and poised; and in his dark eyes there was the unmistakable flash of authority.

He turned, motioning to them and moved toward a door at the far end of the room. The girl followed him without hesitation.

"Come on," Brick said to Pop. "These people seem to know the score."

The two Americans followed their

strange benefactors through several dimly lighted corridors that appeared to be hewn from the solid rock. Finally they entered a spacious hall, somewhat similar to the large room Brick had first seen in Atlantis. The walls were pure white and gleamed strangely, casting a soft illumination over the entire room.

This room, however, was different in many ways from that Brick had seen first. This room was not bare and empty. Every corner was filled with huge machines and the walls and ceiling were covered with tubes, charts, strange indicators and graphs. In the middle of the room was a giant switchboard, covered with rheostats and pressure gauges of a design unfamiliar to him. It was obviously a laboratory, and although it was covered with a film of dust, it looked as ageless and as young as knowledge itself. . .

The girl closed and bolted the heavy door through which they had entered the vast laboratory, and the strange, gray-haired man moved swiftly to a large cabinet against the wall and began removing various trays of equipment and odd-looking devices.

"What's up now?" Pop asked.

Brick shrugged helplessly.

"You've got me."

He watched intently as the gray-haired man carried the equipment he had selected from the cabinet to the huge, intricate switchboard in the middle of the hall. He watched him make adjustments and changes on several of the dials that pitted the surface of the board, and then his eyes widened slightly as he straightened up and beckoned to him and Pop.

The gray-haired man had four small flat boxes in his arms, and from each of these trailed a single wire about a foot long. At the end of the wire was attached a perforated disc with a tiny knob oddly set in the center.

Brick approached curiously, Pop trailing a few cautious feet behind him. The gray-haired man extended one of the boxes to Brick and one to the silver-haired girl who was standing to his left.

The girl took the box immediately. Brick hesitated an instant and then accepted the strange contraption gingerly. With very obvious misgivings Pop did likewise.

THE box was about eight inches long, four inches wide and not more than an inch thick. It was made of some black, grainless material that was as hard as steel to the touch. It had a long slender clamp on one side of it, and the perforated disc also was fitted with a clamp similar to the kind used on radio headphones.

The gray-haired man clamped the disc to his ear so that the tiny knob pressed against his eardrum and then he clamped the slim black box to his shoulder. The foot of wire between the disc and the box was sufficient to allow him to move his head in all directions.

With gestures, he indicated that Brick and Pop were to do the same.

Brick complied with his unspoken request in silence, but Pop grumbled.

"Dang it all, what for?" he snapped. "How do we know what he's up to? These things may blow up after we get 'em on."

"He has them on too," Brick pointed out. "So has the girl. It isn't likely he'll blow them both up with us."

Muttering wrathfully, Pop clamped the apparatus awkwardly on his head and slung the box over his shoulder.

Nothing happened for a while. The tiny knob in Brick's ear was cold and hard, but it was not particularly uncomfortable. He waited patiently for

some explanation of the mysterious apparatus and its use.

The gray-haired man was speaking to them now. But still in the musical, unintelligible tones. Brick tried desperately to gain some meaning from the man's words, but the effort must have shown in his face and eyes, for at a soft word from the girl, the gray-haired man stopped talking and turned impatiently to the switchboard.

There he made another series of adjustments and changes on several of the dial-like devices before turning back to Brick.

His dark intelligent eyes were almost imploring, as he opened his mouth and said,

"Can't you understand me? I am Zoru of Atlantis!"

Brick jerked to attention, every muscle tense. He stared at the gray-haired man incredulously, too dazed to speak.

For the words had been spoken in perfect English!

He could feel Pop's fingers digging into his arm, and he heard the old man's frantic voice in his ears.

"Brick!" Pop gasped. "I'm goin' crazy. I'm hearin' things."

"Please do not be alarmed," the gray-haired man's smooth voice flowed on in cultured English. "The devices you are wearing are merely translating my speech into thought impulses which are delivered directly to your brains. I am not speaking your language but you can understand me. These instruments operate on a principle with which I gather you are unfamiliar. That is not important, however. The fact that they permit us to communicate is all that counts."

He turned to the girl standing next to him and smiled.

"This is my daughter, Leolo. She was saved by you, she has told me. That is why I brought you here to safety."

"Can you understand me?" Brick asked.

The man who called himself Zoru nodded.

"Perfectly," he said.

Brick looked from him to the girl, Leolo in perplexity. The girl was smiling slightly, displaying even, white teeth that gleamed like pearls against the faint rosiness of her lips.

HE HAD never in his life seen such people as these. There was a nobility and dignity about them that flashed from their clear, intelligent eyes and stood forth in their carriage and bearing.

Instinctively he knew them to be good. It was difficult to conceive of them being anything else.

"Who are you?" he asked, directing his question to them both.

Zoru answered:

"It might be hard for you to believe, but my daughter and myself are Atlanteans. We are the last survivors of a race that perished twelve thousand years ago."*

Brick stared from Zoru to his startlingly beautiful daughter bewilderedly. Atlanteans! It was incredible! Impossible!

"You do not believe us," Leolo said quietly. "I can see the doubt in your eyes."

"Good Lord," Brick cried, "I want to believe you, but how can I? Atlantis has been under millions of tons of water for thousands of years. To believe that you—"

* Plato places the final destruction of Atlantis about 9,000 B. C. The submergence was gradual, and it was known to the scientists of Atlantis that it was coming. However, the last submergence was cataclysmic, and volcanic action accompanied it. It is believed that the Mediterranean Basin was flooded when Atlantis sank.—Ed.

Zoru raised a slim hand to Brick's outburst.

"Please," he said. "Listen to me. Possibly I can explain the things that trouble you and raise doubts in your mind."

Brick found himself curiously calmed by the almost pleading sincerity in the voice of Zoru.

"Go ahead," he said. "I'm afraid I've been rude."

Zoru was silent for an instant, and Brick noticed that his dark eyes were strangely glazed, as if they were seeing, not the scene before him but instead were beholding a scene that existed only in time and memory.

"As a scientist of Atlantis," Zoru began, "I knew that one day the continent would sink. A volcanic pressure was building steadily beneath the the continent and it would only be a matter of time until it would get beyond our control. I tried to make the ruling groups understand the immediacy of the danger, but they were too occupied with their savage wars of conquest to heed my pleas. It was Atlantis' misfortune, at that time, to be in the power of a despotic tyrant whose only concern was the extension of his power and armies into every corner of our world."

Zoru paused and his mouth straightened into a bitter line.

"When I realized that nothing I could say or do would prevail against his madness, I decided to save my daughter and myself, if possible, from the holocaust I knew was imminent.

"Accordingly I perfected an opiate and administered it to us a few days before the time, as determined by my calculations, when the volcanic pressure would erupt. We retired to separate sealed chambers, stocked with quantities of condensed food in tablet form, and when my predictions were proven accurate several days later, we embarked on a voyage of dreamless sleep that lasted until a few months ago."

"WHAT awakened you?" Brick asked.

"Air," Zoru replied. "Our chambers were practically perfect vacumns when we constructed them, but time had created fissures and cracks through which air seeped. Our first conclusion was that the continent had risen from the floor of the ocean. My instruments soon convinced me that the position of Atlantis had not changed in the years we had been slumbering. The air, we soon discovered, came from the huge chambers and halls of the city which had been pumped free of mud and water.

"At first we decided to make ourselves known to the strange visitors who had inhabited our former city, but in the end we made up our minds to remain in the comparative safety of these sealed chambers until we knew more of them.

"Then, somehow, you must have shattered the lock that controls the entrance to our hidden chamber."

Brick explained how that had been accomplished. He also explained from whom they had been fleeing and why. When he finished Leolo's dark eyes were flashing indignantly. Zoru shook his noble head gravely.

"When I awoke and realized that these mighty halls and chambers had been pumped dry and hermetically sealed to keep out the ocean, I was certain that an intelligent race of people had sprung into being in the years my daughter and I had been slumbering. People who could accomplish such a feat of hydraulics and engineering would be like unto gods, I thought. It saddens me terribly to think that such

genius is being perverted and prostituted to cause misery instead of peace and happiness in the world."

"They ain't goin' to get away with it," Pop broke in explosively. "No sir!"

Leolo, the silver-haired girl, shook her head sadly.

"It is always the same," she said softly. "A group of ruthless men seize control of armies and use them to enslave their fellow man. Because those that are decent and kind do not wish war and bloodshed, they suffer the tyrants to gain great power before they attempt to stop them. Then it's too late. I presume it is that way now. You have permitted this beast to gain supremacy over you and—"

"No we haven't," Brick said grimly. "I think the people of the world have awakened in time, for once."

Leolo looked at him doubtfully, but deep in her liquid eyes there was a faint glimmer of hope.

"What can we do to help?" she asked impulsively.

BRICK felt a sudden excitement quickening his pulse. As long as spirit like this lived, as long as ideals remained imperishable things, immune to the thought of danger or the ravages of time, liberty and freedom would never be driven from the heart of man.

Zoru stepped forward taking his daughter's hand in his own.

"My daughter speaks without deliberation," he said quietly. "But words spoken from the heart are often more beautiful than those spoken from the mind alone. The failure of Atlantis was partly our failure, since it was really the people of our continent that failed themselves. Perhaps we can extenuate ourselves by aiding you in your fight against the same tyranny that we faced so many centuries ago. If we can we will consider it a great privilege. We are kin to you Americans."

Pop ran his hand through his scanty hair impatiently.

"We're all talking too much," he said irritably. "Sure we all want to fight, but what're we goin' to fight with? How're we goin' to get out of here to warn our people about this nest of adders down here? Them's the things we gotta be thinkin' about."

"Pop's right," Brick admitted. "We are helpless as we stand now."

Zoru smiled, an expression of faint amusement touching his eyes.

"Not completely," he said cryptically.

CHAPTER VII

Miracles in Atlantis

"WHAT do you mean?" Brick demanded.

Without speaking Zoru walked to the side of the room and pressed a square panel that was set in the wall about three feet from the ground.

Noiselessly a large section of the wall, from the ceiling to the floor, swung back, revealing another large room.

"Come with me," Zoru said. He entered the newly disclosed room.

Rather uncertainly Brick and Pop followed the straight figure of the Atlantean. The room was the most practical looking room of all those they had seen outside of the Nazi occupied area of Atlantis.*

The walls were of heavy material

* The sealed halls of Atlantis were not all undamaged by the earthquakes, and many of them filled with water. It was these that the Nazi engineers pumped dry and repaired for use as bases for the pocket-submarine fleet. The ingenuity of the German engineer is well-known, but it must have been a tremendous task to empty those vast halls, construct locks and entrances for the submarines, and maintain a sufficient air pressure to care for all the wants of the base.—Ed.

that looked like a form of hard asphalt, and in one wall was a huge bronze plate that was hinged on one side and clamped on the other. In the center of the room was a queer contraption that looked surprisingly like a huge, metallic bug. It was about twenty feet long, eight feet high and four feet wide. It had one door as far as they could see, and the top was made of heavy green glass. It rested on six spiked wheels, which were almost as high as the machine itself.

"This," Zoru explained, "was a conveyance used in crossing rough, rugged terrain. I think with a few repairs and adjustments we can utilize it in leaving Atlantis. That is, if you're willing to take a rather long chance."

"We'll take any chance," Brick said, "but how can this thing get us out of here? We're hundreds of feet under water you know."

"Yes, I am aware of that," Zoru said, with faint irony. "But," he pointed to the huge bronze plate, "that clamp opens to a corridor about fifty feet long. With luck we can devise a decompression chamber of sorts. I take it we'll need something like that. Then we can convert this land machine into a below-surface craft. Our only serious problem will be in bringing it to the surface. But we can face that problem when we come to it. The important thing is to start readying this land transport for our needs."

The Atlantean's quiet confidence in speaking of these Herculean labors was impressive.

"O. K." Brick said grimly. "Let's start to work."

In the days that followed the three men worked like horses for sixteen hours out of each twenty-four. Leolo discarded her flowing gown for a pair of loose trousers and a blouse and worked beside the men, handing them tools and doing what work she could.

She brought them their food, which consisted of the condensed tablets Zoru had stocked in their chamber before taking the opiate.

In spite of Brick's realization of Zoru's scientific wizardry, he was being constantly amazed by the man's almost supernatural skill in adapting his talents to the creation of things far outside his own experience.

Oxygen tanks puzzled him for about fifteen minutes, but when Brick got the principle across to him, it was a matter of only days before they were completed.

The two Americans learned much of the civilization of ancient Atlantis, its people, its ways and customs, but one product of Atlantis that Brick found practically insoluble was the silver-haired Leolo.

AS EACH day passed her attitude toward him underwent subtle changes. But woman-like the changes were not consistent. One minute, discussing a mechanical problem, she would be all warm, eager friendliness. The next second she would turn, as if he had offended her, and leave him.

One day while they were resting briefly, she said.

"You have no thought in your mind but this work, have you?"

"That's right," he said. "It's the only thing that counts with me."

She was silent for an instant, then she rose and left him without a word. He sat up, puzzled, wondering what he had said wrong.

He sighed and stretched out on the floor again. He wanted her to like him more than he wanted anything, but he didn't seem to be making much progress.

At the end of the second week it

was obvious that the job ahead of them was bigger than they thought. The crawler, as they had named the machine, was still land-bound. A practical method for permitting it to reach the surface had not been hit upon.

A fear that Brick had kept to himself was gnawing at him. He knew that the German sub base was preparing to launch a mighty attack—somewhere, sometime. But where? When?

It was maddening to be so near and yet so far from being able to check their plans. For two rest stretches he tossed sleeplessly. For it was becoming more and more apparent what he must do.

Pop was the first to notice the tension he was under.

"What're you so edgy about?" he asked bluntly.

Brick ran both hands through his wavy hair nervously.

"When we left the base," he snapped, "they were preparing to make a big raid somewhere. I know it's not an ordinary attack because the captain practically implied that it was being directed at the American navy too. The thing is this: We've got to get the details on that attack. If we don't it won't do us any good to get out of here."

"But how're you going to find out?" Pop demanded. "The only guy'd know would be the captain. And he ain't been accepting our invitations to tea lately. In fact it wouldn't surprise me a bit if he ain't downright mad at us."

"This isn't funny," Brick said soberly.

"I know it ain't," Pop retorted, "but the only way you're goin' to find out what you want is when the captain drops in on us so you can ask him."

"There's another way," Brick said quietly.

"Name it."

Brick glanced at Leolo, then Zoru, before answering.

"I might drop in on him!"

POP leaped to his feet sputtering.

"You're crazy," he stormed. "Absolutely batty. You wouldn't have the ghost of a chance."

Brick shrugged. With typical abruptness his decision was reached.

"I'm going to take a crack at it," he said firmly. "We've got to know what the captain is getting ready to pull. The fact that the American navy might be jeopardized is enough to make me disregard the chances. If there was only one in a million I'd have to take it."

Pop knew better than to waste his breath arguing.

"All right, you bull-headed baboon," he said wearily. "Go ahead, but don't expect me to feel sorry for you when you get caught."

Brick grinned then. Zoru laid a hand on his shoulder and said seriously, "Is this absolutely necessary?"

"Yep," Brick said. "You know I wouldn't do a thing like this for a lark. Since I've made up my mind there's nothing more to wait for. I'll leave now and with good luck I'll be back in two hours."

He turned to leave, but Leolo touched his arm gently.

"If you must go," she said softly. "I can take you by the shortest route. It will save you time and greatly lessen the chance of detection."

"Fine," Brick said. He waved a salute to Pop and Zoru, then followed Leolo from the room.

Leolo moved ahead of him with silent, graceful steps. Through a narrow door he followed her, then through the dark mistiness of a labyrinthine passage way that led finally to a large, fair-

ly well-lighted corridor that extended ahead of them for several hundred yards.

At the end of the corridor Leolo stopped before an almost unnoticeable door.

"This opens," she said, "under the archway that connects the two main council rooms."

"Thanks a lot," Brick said awkwardly. He moved slowly toward the door.

"Aren't you going to say good-bye?" Leolo asked softly.

Brick turned suddenly and caught her shoulders in his big hands. His eyes moved over the shining waves of silver hair framing her piquant face and fathomless dark eyes. His heart pounded heavily in his breast as he stared at this girl of unreal loveliness.

"Not good-bye," he said huskily, "but hello."

He kissed her once, gently, barely touching her lips. He removed the language device from his head and gave it to her, then stepped through the door. He closed it behind him quickly, but not quickly enough to blanket the sound of her sobbing.

With an effort, he jerked all of his faculties and thoughts from the girl and concentrated every atom of his will on the job before him.

A glance gave him his location. He was under the archway that connected the mighty halls that had been his first glimpse of Atlantis. The bronze door that led to the occupied section of the continent was to his left, a symbol of the cleavage between one world and another.*

Behind it—somewhere—was the information he must have. He moved toward it silently.

* Had the Nazis, when they originally began work on the Atlantis base, gone beyond this bronze door, they might have saved a lot of time and labor, since the halls beyond were not flooded. Fortunately they did not, or 1941 might have seen disaster for Britain in the Atlantic.—Ed.

CHAPTER VIII

Terrible News

MINUTES later Brick stood just outside the great bronze door that was the barrier between the ancient, still unexplored world of Atlantis and the sections that had been turned into a modern mechanized Nazi underwater fortress.

He was breathing heavily, and now he stood close against the door, letting the beating of his heart regain normalcy and his lungs resume their steady function. And his ear was pressed close against the cold metal of the door while he listened for sounds from the other side.

After a moment, Brick was able to catch the sounds. They indicated what he had feared—a sentry was posted there. The sentry's footsteps came with muffled regularity.

One-two-three-four-five. (p a u s e) *One-two-three-four-five.*

Carefully, Brick listened. The sentry was evidently pacing back and forth before the door. As the sounds increased, then diminished, Brick was soon able to tell which series of five steps took the sentry away from the door, and which brought him back to it. This was going to be important.

Brick's hand found the mechanism that would open the great bronze door. And now he held his breath, listening, making certain. Deadly certain. A miscalculation would mean—

One-two-three-four-five.

The steps came close to the door.

Pause.

One-two-three—

The steps were moving away!

Brick's hand shoved hard down on

the handle, pulled roughly against the cold bronze surface of the door. It swung back from his weight.

And then the cold glare of arc lamps, the gust of warm oily air inside the Nazi base came to him through the opening.

He didn't hesitate. Timing was everything. He wheeled sharply on his left foot, throwing his weight to the left, lunging desperately in the direction of the sentry's gray-blue figure.

Timing was everything. Brick's timing had been perfect.

The sentry had just started back to the door. Its swift and unexpected opening, the sudden appearance of Brick, the fact that he was in range for a flying tackle—these were the odds against him.

Brick didn't muff those odds. His shoulder drove hard into the pit of the startled sentry's stomach. His arms wrapped ferociously around the stocky legs of the guard, pulling in sharply, viciously, as his legs churned with piston-like power, driving the fellow back and down.

The shoulder in the pit of the stomach cut off the fellow's wind. He had no breath, no time, to cry out. Brick's aim was as excellent as the tackle. He'd smashed him straight back against the corridor wall.

A sickening sound as they went down together indicated that the sentry's head had cracked hard. Brick felt the body go limp in his arms.

The sentry was out cold.

Brick untangled himself and rose swiftly to his feet. He gave one quick glance at his victim's open mouth, closed eyes, and limply rolling head. Then, satisfied, he got to work.

The second part of his plan was as important as the first had been. Without it, he'd never be able to get through those corridors.

MINUTES later Brick stood back and adjusted his tightly fitting blue-gray uniform coat. He grinned for an instant at the still inert body of the now denuded sentry. Then, quickly, Brick tore his own discarded clothing into long strips. Swiftly, he gagged and bound his victim so that the fellow would be helpless when he came around.

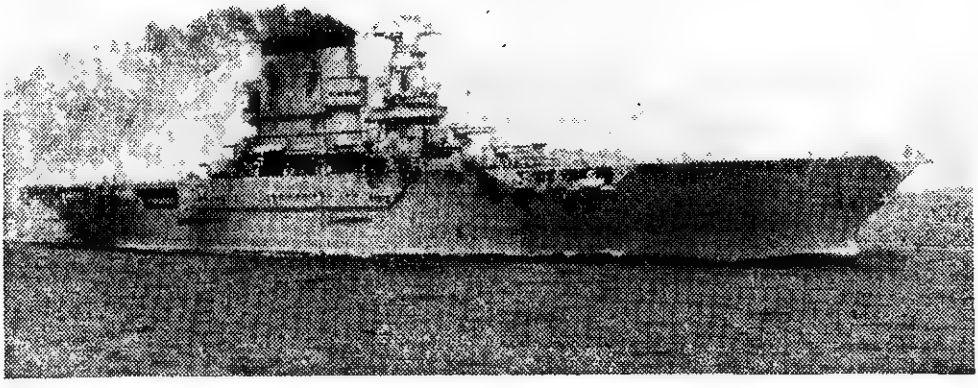
The fellow had been carrying a rifle. It lay in a corner by the bronze door. Brick hesitated for an instant, then left it where it was. It would be excess baggage. If things got to the point where he'd have to use it, he'd be a goner anyway.

There were two corridors leading off from the passageway in which Brick now stood. He looked at each of them dubiously. He wasn't certain where the captain's quarters were, and a wrong turn might mean failure.

Brick took a deep breath, then started down the right passageway. He'd have to take his chances on its being the one. There was no sign of other sentries along the way as Brick moved onward. Nevertheless he pulled his cap down slightly over his forehead and hunched his chin into the stiff collar of his uniform coat, keeping his features hidden as well as he could.

Several hundred yards ahead there was another corridor branching off to the left. It was wider, better illuminated than the first. Brick turned off into it. Suddenly, when he had gone perhaps a hundred feet, a gray-blue uniformed figure stepped from an almost concealed doorway on the side of the corridor. Brick kept his head lowered and forced himself to walk evenly, calmly, as the fellow passed.

There was the temptation to run, or look back. But Brick did neither, and the clack of the uniformed sailor's heavy boots was steady as he went on



* Pictured here is the United States Aircraft Carrier, "Lexington," which took part in the historic battle of Atlantis, in which the Nazi pocket-submarine fleet came to final grips with the greatest convoy and armada of all time. For the first time in naval history, depth bombs were used by aircraft, and the new value of the aircraft carrier against submarines was demonstrated.

in the opposite direction. Brick breathed a deep sigh of relief. And suddenly he was aware that the warm air was thickening, getting oilier.

He was on the right track. He was getting closer to the mechanical operations quarters. And in the same vicinity with those quarters, Brick knew, was the office of the captain!

Now Brick could hear the faint humming of the huge dynamoes that were also part of the mechanical operations quarters. His heart quickened.

There were more sailors, four of them, who passed Brick without so much as a glance. He walked onward. An officer was the next to pass him, and Brick came to a smart attention, clicking his heels and saluting promptly. His nerves screamed tensely as he gazed rigidly straight forward at the officer. But the fellow merely touched his visored cap, not even looking at Brick, apparently preoccupied with other matters.

Then, a hundred yards later, Brick found it. A black metallic door, emblazoned with a silver swastika underneath which was the German naval insignia of a captain!

Von Herrman's quarters!

Brick turned for an instant, looking up and down the corridor. There was no one in sight. His hand trembled ever so slightly as it sought the knob on the thick black door. He turned it softly, the door going in against his weight.

The room—about fifteen feet square, with a desk, a chair, files, and a liquor cabinet—was deserted.

BRICK closed the door softly behind him. His heart pounded like a trip hammer. He gazed swiftly at the desk, trying to discover from the state it was in if it had been left hastily. No. Everything was in order.

Closing the door a little more firmly —it hadn't quite closed—Brick heard a sharp *click!* His luck, he knew, had held. The door hadn't been quite closed when he'd first entered. That was why he'd had such easy access to

it. But now it was locked—as the one who'd left the room last had intended it to be—and there was no chance of a suspicious seaman entering from the outside.

Brick stepped quickly across the room, and in another instant was rifling through the drawers of Von Herrman's desk. There were dispatches, papers of all description, carefully and methodically placed in folders. They were all in German, and Brick cursed his lack of knowledge of the language.

Minutes crept by. Brick gave up his search through the desk. He went over to the files. They were locked. A letter opener, inserted at the edges, opened the first file.

Brick's fingers found heavy, waterproofed paper. It was rolled. He dragged it forth. A map. Brick's lips tightened in satisfaction. Here was a language he could understand.

He stepped back to Von Herrman's desk and spread the map out on its polished top. A map of the Atlantic ocean.

Brick gasped. The map indicated precisely, by longitude and latitude, the location of the sunken submarine base at Atlantis! Furthermore, it was decorated with a series of lines and small drawings of battlecraft. Brick peered closely at this. Then his heart leaped to his throat. The battlecraft, the lines indicated, were leaving the shores of the United States.

And what was more important, they were decorated, variously, with American and British flags!

And now it became even more hideously clear to Brick. There were other, smaller, ships sketched in on the map. These carried no flags and were obviously supposed to represent merchant craft. And a staggering number of merchant craft!

A convoy—it could be nothing else!

Rapidly, Brick made an estimate of the number of merchant craft in the convoy. He shook his head unbelievingly. There were at least eight hundred craft involved, possibly a thousand!

And to guard these ships there were the combined Atlantic naval forces of both the United States and Great Britain!*

The U.S. Fleet, from the story told by the map, was to take the convoy several hundred miles out to sea where —at a designated rendezvous—they would join the British fleet. Both naval convoys would then join and guard the fleet of merchant ships through the more hazardous journey that lay ahead.

And that hazardous journey brought the entire convoy—quite unwittingly—directly over the undersea submarine base at Atlantis!

BRICK'S face was ashen, and he stepped back from the desk falteringly, not quite able to comprehend fully the terrible disaster that waited the convoy. Now he knew. Now he was certain that his hunch had been right. Von Herrman's veiled hints, the rush of activity around the base, were for one reason. And that reason was

* Early in August, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt, president of the United States, and Winston Churchill, prime minister of Britain, met in their history-making rendezvous in the Atlantic for a peace conference which resulted in the famous "Eight Points." Later it was divulged that Aid to Britain was a chief topic of discussion, and the vast convoy that was slated for destruction by Von Herrman's murderous submarine fleet, was planned and the combined might of the British and American navies was scheduled for the convoy. Upon this one convoy the fate of the war hung, all unknown by the two famous men. If it had been destroyed, and the British and American main fleets wiped out, the war would have been Hitler's. American public opinion, at the time of the conference, would have been against this "pooling" of the great fleets, but as events turned out late in 1941, the opportunity was presented to turn suspense into certain victory.—Ed.

an attack against the greatest convoy man had ever known!

He had a horrible vision of Von Herrman's undersea sharks slipping up through the green murk of the waters over the base. Slipping stealthily surfaceward, hundreds of submarines thirsting to wreak horrible destruction on the great flotilla that would pass unwittingly above.

Brick was also terribly certain now that this attack upon the combined U.S. and British convoy was dreadfully close. Closer than he dared imagine. And there would be no one to warn the convoy. No one to stop the hell and fury of death and destruction that would mark the most staggering Axis naval victory in this war.

No one, that was, but Brick himself. For he was the only one who knew of the impending disaster. He was the only one who could hope to stop this ghastly ambush.

But how?

With sickening bitterness, overpowering despair, Brick realized that he was one man against thousands. He felt a maddening surge of helpless rage and futility. There had to be a way. If it meant the trading of his own life to save the thousands of those on the convoy ships it would be a cheap bargain. Brick had been through too much in these past few weeks to value his own life as worth a damn. Snuffing the spark from it uselessly, futilely, was one thing—finding something worth dying for was another.

Brick's brain was racing, seeking an idea that might have a chance in a million, a hundred million. Something. He *had* to think of something.

He turned away from the desk, picking up the map automatically, and walked to the filing cabinet. He rolled the thick, water-proof paper and crammed it in the open drawer.

Brick was shoving the case shut, and suddenly a sound behind him made him wheel.

Captain Von Herrman stood in the door of the office!

"Am I to understand that I have a new clerk-orderly?" his iron voice asked smoothly. There was a mocking, taunting grin on his face.

And there was a thick, blue-barreled Luger held levelly in his hand. It pointed directly at Brick's belly!

CHAPTER IX

Trapped!

BRICK'S blood congealed in his veins, and icy fingers played over his spine. He found words hard to command as he stood there frozen in fear. But this was a different fear, Brick knew. This was a terror not for himself, but for the thousands and thousands of souls who would have their death sentences signed by the crisp bark of the gun held in Von Herrman's hand. This was a fear for the men in the vast convoy whose lives depended on what happened to Brick Harrington in the next few minutes.

Von Herrman stepped up within three yards of Brick.

"Put your hands aloft, please!" he snapped.

Brick raised his arms above his head, his eyes still fixed in numb fascination on the muzzle of that Luger.

"You have found your perusal of my, ah, library interesting?"

Suddenly Brick was choking with rage. His words were a merciful escape valve for the maddening frustration that held him.

"Damn you, Von Herrman!" Brick's hands clenched to fists above his head.

"Steady, my Yankee hothead!" Von Herrman's voice didn't raise. His eyes

flicked over to the still half-open filing cabinet. "You have seen that very interesting map," he stated matter-of-factly. "A most unfortunate observation on your part."

Brick's lips worked, but he said nothing.

"Within twenty-four hours I could make you a present of that map, my friend. I'd be quite finished with it then. Yes, I could make you a present of that map, but unfortunately you'll be dead by then." Von Herrman seemed amused as he spoke. Then he turned and barked a command in German.

Three sailors, clad in gray-blue uniforms and carrying rifles, stepped through the door. They'd obviously been stationed outside by the captain. Their faces expressed no emotion as they faced Brick, rifles targeting him menacingly.

Von Herrman shoved his Luger into its holster beneath his uniform coat.

"If you hadn't made such a meddling fool of yourself," the Captain said, "you might have lived to leave here someday. However, I'm very much afraid that I'll have to order these men to take you out and shoot you." His eyes flicked over the uniform Brick had taken from the sentry. "You leave me no other course, inasmuch as you have taken the guise of one of my sailors, and were caught spying in my quarters."

Brick watched Von Herrman turn, heard his steely voice coolly issue orders to the sailors. Then the captain turned back to Brick for an instant before he stepped from the room.

"I am sorry we can't give you a full quota for your firing squad. Military procedure should allow you that. However, we're using every available man in the base for preparations at the moment. You will be allowed a handkerchief, if you like. It should be painless, comparatively. These men are excellent shots."

BRICK was left alone with the three sailors. One of them stepped forward, prodding him with a rifle end, and nodded with his head toward the door. Then, with a guard on either side, and another marching directly behind him, Brick walked slowly out of the office and into the corridor he'd left but minutes before.

Another prod from the rifle of the sailor behind him, and Brick started down the corridor in the direction from which he had originally come. They walked in silence, the only sound coming from the rhythmic stomp of the heavy boots they wore.

Hazing Brick's mind was a dull, hopeless agonizing despair. This was it. This was the finish. Exit Brick Harrington—and exit the thousands of poor damned souls on the convoys that were at this very minute steaming toward Atlantis, and a meeting with death.

Another corridor, a turn.

There seemed no sailors about, now, and the silence, broken only by the *thump-thump-thump* of heavy boots grew almost unbearable. Brick could see the blood washing the green foam of the sea. He could hear the screams and curses of bewildered, dying men. Men caught without a fighting chance. Men drowning and dying in a mad *mardi gras* of horror and confusion, while their guns thundered uselessly against the unseen enemy that lurked below them.

The next corridor was narrower, and followed by another turn. Brick realized dully that this was precisely the way he had traveled in finding Von Herrman's quarters.

Thump-thump-thump. Rhythmic,

precision-like, taking him to a wall somewhere at the end of these corridors. A wall against which Brick Harrington and a thousand other Yanks and Britishers would die.

Far ahead, Brick could see the dull sheen of the great bronze door that lead to the unexplored reaches of Atlantis. The door was at the end of this very corridor. But it seemed miles away.

"These men are excellent shots." The words echoed in Brick's mind. Von Herrman hadn't been lying. He had promised Brick that. And he'd given Brick an indication of what to expect if he were so very foolish as to try an escape.

Brick could practically hear the impact of the bullet which would thud into his spine from the rifle of the sailor behind him, should he try to escape. There were three of them, he kept reminding himself, all excellent shots. But still a taunting, maddening little voice at the back of his brain urged him to try. He bit hard into his underlip. If a chance presented itself—just one chance—

Thump-thump-thump. Then a harsh, guttural command from the sailor behind him, a hand hard on his shoulder, and the procession came to a halt.

Brick saw it then. An alcove, just off the side of the passageway. It was perhaps ten yards wide and five yards deep. It was illuminated by three arc bulbs that threw the whitewalled stone into bald relief.

And then Brick saw the chipped pock marks that ran straight across the back wall, and a chill swept up his spine. Bullets had left those traces. This was the place where Von Herrman settled unpleasant matters concerning spies, or mutiny within the ranks. This was the firing wall.

THE sailor who had marched behind Brick now took him by the elbow and pushed him back into the alcove and up against the wall. There was the same phlegmatic lack of expression on his features. His eyes registered neither sympathy nor curiosity. He stepped back from Brick, his rifle still held in readiness, just in case.

Fishing deep into the pocket of his uniform tunic, the sailor drew forth a dirty linen handkerchief. He extended it to Brick, motioning toward his eyes.

"Keep it," Brick snarled. "I don't like your laundry."

The sailor shrugged, put the handkerchief back in his pocket. Then he stepped back and joined his fellows. They formed a precise line, guns pointing toward the floor.

The sailor who'd proffered the handkerchief barked an order. The guns snapped up to their shoulders.

Another harshly barked command. Brick knew it to be "Ready!"

Then the guttural German command for "Aim!"

Brick's nerves screamed, urging him to drive forward at them, to take a chance—his last chance!

Then suddenly the corridor reverberated with the sound of a rifle shot blasting through the tenseness of the silence.

It was as if Time hung motionless while the gunfire echoed and reechoed through the length of the passageway. And slowly, like a newsreel run at quarter speed, the sailor at the end of the firing line jerked backward, arms going wide, gun falling, as a gruesome red splotch opened at the front of his throat.

In the next instant he had toppled face forward, dead!

And in the same instant Brick Harrington had leaped toward the sailor on the far end of the line just as that

fellow wheeled in the direction from which the bullet that downed his comrade had come.

Brick used this momentary advantage to seize the sailor's arm as he raised his rifle to his shoulder. And with one knee in the pit of the German's back, Brick jerked him back and down to the floor.

In the split second before he was rolling on the floor in a tangle of arms and legs, Brick caught a glimpse of the liberator who had fired the shot. He was a small, red faced little man, crouching on one knee, rifle aimed for a second shot, less than a hundred yards down the corridor leading to the bronze door.

It was Pop!

Brick had time to drive his fist three times into the face of the sailor with whom he still struggled. And then his palm was hard against his adversary's face as he smashed the fellow's head again and again against the floor.

Using the inert body beneath him as a shield, Brick rolled over and climbed to his feet, dragging the unconscious body of the sailor up with him.

The remaining active sailor had dropped flat on his belly and was taking cool aim at the still firing figure of Pop.

Pop's first shot had been a direct hit, tearing the throat from his victim. But obviously the excitement was telling on his accuracy, for he was firing wildly, now, bullets zinging against the four walls of the corridor and alcove.

But the Nazi sailor was calm. Brick saw him drawing bead, unmindful of the bullets flying around him. And Brick frantically shoved the unnecessary burden of the unconscious sailor aside and leaped wildly toward the back of the sailor firing from the floor.

He was too late. Too late, for even as he launched his wild dive, Brick saw the fellow's gun flash; saw Pop half rise from his crouching position, pain and surprise on his features, a growing, horribly crimson blot in the center of his breast. This Nazi was an excellent shot. Von Herrman hadn't lied.

BRICK landed atop the sailor's back, the force of his leap knocking the wind from the fellow's lungs. Brick was sobbing, crying wildly as he hammered the killer beneath him into unconsciousness. Then he rose and dashed down the corridor to where Pop lay queerly sprawled on his side.

Pop's head was in Brick's arms, and the little man was coughing foamy blood. He looked weakly at Brick, recognition and satisfaction in his eyes.

"Pop!" Brick cried. "Oh, God, Pop!"

The little red faced fellow smiled.

"Ain't the . . . the shot I usta be!" The effort was costing him his remaining strength.

Brick knew instinctively, without the old man's saying so, that Pop had picked up the rifle belonging to the trussed guard by the bronze door whom Brick had overpowered. Brick knew, too, that Pop's loyalty and devotion had made him restless, uneasy, over Brick's whereabouts. Obviously Pop had started out after him and found him when he had only to lose his life for his trouble.

There was a glaze dimming Pop's eyesight, now, and he coughed weakly.

"Brick," he whispered, "Brick!"

Brick wiped the sweat from the old man's eyes, jaw grim and heart aching.

"What, Pop?"

"Stand a good, *kughh,* good watch, son."

"Yes, Pop." Brick was crying, unashamed.

"Last voyage," the old man whispered. "Hafta, *kughh,* stand a good watch."

"I'm on watch, Pop."

"Good, tha's good, son. Las' voyage . . . las' voyage home!" The old man's head rolled limply against Brick's blouse. His eyes lidded for the last time. The muscles of his jaw were frozen rigidly as if he refused to show weakness even in death.

Brick lowered Pop's head to the floor gently. Far down the corridor he could hear shouting and running footsteps. They were growing louder with every second.

Others had heard the gunfire, were racing toward the sound of the fighting. Brick stood up, eyes stony, jaw set hard. He looked down at Pop.

"I'll even that score for you, old fella," he whispered. "You can bet your sea boots on it!"

He turned then, for the footsteps were drawing nearer, and the voices growing louder.

CHAPTER V

Attack!

LEOLO sprang to her feet as the heavy door of the work chamber swung open and Brick strode in. His face was white and the tendons along his jaw were as taut as cords. There was an expression in his eyes that was frighteningly new to her. It was hate, controlled and cold, but its very deliberateness was terrifying.

She hurried to his side, helped him adjust the device that co-ordinated their thought impulses into understandable speech.

"I was so worried," she said, almost frantically. "After Pop left—"

"Pop's dead," Brick said dully. "He saved me, but gave his life doing it."

The words passed his stiff lips, but hearing them, he was still unable to believe that Pop was actually gone. On the way back from the occupied section the realization of Pop's death was a dull, aching pain that, somehow, didn't seem real.

Zoru laid his hand gently on Brick's shoulder.

"He died as he would have wished," he said gently. "As a brave man and hero, fighting for his country. He wouldn't want us to sorrow for him."

"You're right," Brick said grimly. "He'd say, 'What the devil are you gabbing about me for when there's a job to be done?' "

"What did you find out?" Zoru asked quietly.

Brick told him then as swiftly as possible of the mighty underwater attack against the combined British and American fleets scheduled for the next twenty-four hours.

"This is the living room. The kitchen and bath are in the fourth dimension!"

When he had finished Zoru clenched his fists nervously.

"That doesn't give us much time," he muttered anxiously. "We still have no practical method for raising the Crawler. It is almost too late now to warn your country even if we did succeed in getting to the surface. While you were gone I moved it into the decompression chamber, but that only takes us fifty feet closer to our objective. Everything is in readiness, if I could just devise some method of accomplishing the elevation."

Brick groaned and jammed his fists viciously into his pockets.

"We're no closer than before," he grated. "If we only had a weapon that would blast this damn nest of sharks into Hades I'd be glad to pull the trigger even if it meant my own life."

"Father!" Leolo cried suddenly. "We *do* have a weapon. Don't you remember the fisherman's guns? There are two of them in the laboratory locker. Would they help?"

Brick glanced sharply at the girl.

"What kind of weapon is it?" he said tensely.

ZORU answered the question with a weary smile.

"I'm afraid they wouldn't be of any use. They are hydrogen guns that our fishermen used in stunning the larger fish of the ocean. They could not—"

His voice trailed off and he did not complete the sentence. An excited, speculative expression brought tense lines onto his keenly intelligent features. He began to pace rapidly up and down the floor, his hands clenching and unclenching nervously.

"Is there a chance?" Brick cried.

"For us," Zoru said thoughtfully, "there is no chance at all. But for the navies of your country there *is* a chance. A slim, terrible chance. But at least, a chance."

"For God's sake!" Brick cried. "What is it?"

"The hydrogen guns as they exist now are useless," Zoru spoke rapidly. "They were constructed to stun, not kill, large fish. But with an amplifying device their power could be increased to the point where they might destroy fish. Even metal fish!"*

"You mean," Brick almost shouted, "we could turn this weapon against German subs?"

Zoru nodded.

"But we will have to use the Crawler as it is. You understand that once we leave in it we can not come back. And we can not rise. That is why I said there would be no chance for us."

Brick hesitated helplessly. For himself there was no decision to be made. But it was not only his life that would be sacrificed. He didn't have the right to ask Leolo and Zoru to sacrifice theirs.

His shoulders slumped wearily.

"I can't ask," he began, but Leolo interrupted him softly.

"You don't have to ask us," she said.

"Leolo is right," Zoru said quietly. "Let us start to work. We have much to do."

Brick felt an eager flame of hope fluttering in his breast.

* Late in Atlantis' last days, much of it being submerged, it became necessary to depend to greater and greater extent on the foodstuffs of the sea for existence. Therefore, fishing became an important factor for continued existence, and new methods were devised. The hydrogen gun was invented, and worked on a principle of breaking down the water into its component gases. Fish, caught in the huge bubbles, suffered an expansion of their gills and consequent shock that stunned them upon emergence into water again. They then floated to the surface and were easily captured. The principle of this breaking down of water into its gases is a simple one, being simply a matter of electrolysis. Two electrodes, giving off a current, as in a battery, cause the action to take place. Hydrogen and oxygen are the two major gases in the makeup of water, and both are equally able to knock a fish out of action.—Ed.

"Come on," he said with grim exultation.

IT TOOK sixteen precious hours for Zoru to transform the two hydrogen guns into weapons of destruction. Even when the job was completed, the guns, to Brick, looked hopelessly innocent. Each gun consisted of a six-foot barrel about four inches in diameter. The barrel connected to a thick drum about the size of a wash tub on which was welded a control board. Their principle was a mystery to him but he knew that time was too important to waste in explanations, so he did not impede Zoru with questions.

When the guns were in place their muzzles protruded from the nose of the Crawler like the feelers of a giant bug.

And twenty-five hours had flitted past. Neither of the three had slept. They were grimy and exhausted, but there was an unquenchable inner flame driving them on far beyond the limits of their normal strength.

Brick's impatience burned him like a fever. Already the deadly subs would be slipping upward like schools of sharks to unleash their terrible destructive power on the convoy of ships carrying supplies that meant life to the British.

"How much longer?" he asked desperately.

Zoru didn't answer. Instead he made a last adjustment on the guns, then straightened up, his face haggard with weariness, but a glint of triumph in his eyes.

"We are ready," he said.

With a smile, the first in days, Brick wheeled and climbed out of the Crawler. It was the work of an instant to twist the wheel that controlled the water locks. A steady trickle of water flowed through the valve spreading over the floor in a widening circle.

Leolo was standing by the ladder when he turned and started for the rear door of the makeshift compression chamber. There was a strange mixture of relief and sadness in her expression. He could understand something of what she felt.

"Better climb in," he said gently. "When I close and clamp the rear door we're shoving off."

She smiled at him fleetingly. Then with a last long look back, she turned and climbed into the Crawler. In that look she had said good-bye to Atlantis.

The water was up to Brick's ankles as he strode toward the rear door. In six more minutes the chamber would be filled, the pressure equalized, then the great door that held back the crushing force of the ocean would open automatically.

It was then that he saw, through the half open door of the chamber, the three Germans moving cautiously through the laboratory, guns in hand!

The expressions of greedy triumph on their faces told the whole story. They had evidently stumbled on the sealed section of Atlantis, and followed the twisting corridors to the lab.

Brick had perhaps one-half second advantage over them. But he was too stunned to utilize it. It was gone then, for they spotted him, and with a concerted roar, hurled themselves forward.

THEIR guns coughed spitefully, viciously, as they charged the door. A slug slammed into Brick's shoulder with enough force to knock him on his back had he been standing still.

But he wasn't standing still. He was charging forward, every muscle in his body straining. The slug turned him half-way around, but it didn't stop him. With a desperate lunge he hurled himself at the door. His good shoul-

der drove into its hard surface at the same instant that the Germans crashed against it.

For a second the door remained motionless, pressed in a vise of the human bodies straining at either side of it. Then it swung inward, slowly but inexorably, as the superior weight of the three Germans told against Brick's tiring body.

Dimly he heard a scream behind him, but it was blotted out as one of the Germans forced his arm through the steadily widening crack and pounded his thick fist against Brick's face. He tasted salty blood in his mouth.

Then he heard a heavy, ponderous, crunching sound growing in volume in back of him. With a sudden flash of clarity his mind identified the sound. It was the Crawler's spikes biting into the floor.

Desperately, Brick hurled himself sideways. He slipped to his knees, foundering in the waist-high water. But he was out of the path of the huge spiked wheels of the Crawler as they pressed against the door and closed it with powerful, irresistible force.

Brick pressed his hand to his face as a horrible, gasping scream broke high and then gurgled into frothy silence.

One of the Germans hadn't gotten clear of the closing door.

Sickened, Brisk staggered to his feet and threw the bolts that sealed it. The water was breast-high when he climbed the ladder and toppled into the Crawler.

Zoru closed the hatch behind him and bolted it. Leolo helped him to his feet and led him to a chair. Blood was streaming down his shirt from the slug wound in his shoulder.

"There's nothing for you to do now," Leolo whispered soothingly. "Just rest for a moment."

Her voice was like the whisper of a breeze in his ears. Although he knew he shouldn't, he closed his eyes.

HE CAME around with a start. Beneath his feet he could feel the floor of the Crawler twisting and rocking. Looking up he saw, through the thick glass top, the green murk of the Atlantic not two feet above his head.

Zoru was up front at the controls and Leolo was at his side. Brick climbed to his feet. His wound had stopped bleeding, but it was aching horribly. He felt a surge of relief flooding through him. They were away from Atlantis, heading for the enemy.

"How long have I been out?" he asked, surprised at the weakness of his voice.

Leolo turned and hurried to him, her face anxious.

"Just a few moments," she told him. "We just left the compression chamber and have traveled only a hundred feet or so."

Brick put an arm over her shoulder and let her help him to the front of the Crawler alongside Zoru. Through the thick curved glass cowl that surrounded the control room he could see opaque masses of green waters swirling before him. He sat down and felt the back of the chair push into his spine as the nose of the Crawler tilted upward as it lumbered up a hillock of muddy sand. The floor of the ocean was pock marked with craters * of all sizes and shapes.

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* Volcanic action on the ocean floor is common, and the waters do not quench the fires without completion of the action. Therefore, it is certain that volcanic craters exist on the ocean floor just as they do on land. In an undersea eruption, the danger of earthquake is much greater, since water instantly rushes into any opening, and causes a terrific explosion. Most of the violent quakes of history have been due to entrance of sea water into a live crater. Krakatoa was such a crater, and its explosion was so loud it was heard half-way around the earth.—Ed.

through which the squat, bug-like Crawler scurried like a powerful turtle. Its huge spiked wheels bit deeply into rock and sand, driving it forward with awkward speed.

Turning to his left, Brick drew in his breath sharply. They were skirting the edges of the huge domed structures of Atlantis. Starkly white in the green water the curiously formed buildings presented a spectacle that was fairy-like in its fantastic unreality.

But this could not drive from his mind the job that faced them. The terribly, all important job of checking the submarine attack on the huge American convoy. Sitting in the ridiculously small Crawler, unarmed save for the two hydrogen guns, the thought of the task they had set out to accomplish seemed absurdly hopeless. Their strongest blows against hundreds of subs would be childishly ineffective. Suddenly all of the harrowing risks they had taken seemed pointless and futile.

"We should sight the enemy," Zoru said, "in another few minutes. Around the next group of buildings is the location of their main docks. Better get ready to fire."

"What good will that do?" Brick asked bitterly.

"These apparently innocuous guns might surprise you," Zoru said calmly. "Unfortunately we had no way of testing the amplifying device I attached to them. But if it works as I hope it will the results will be very interesting."

A moment later, Brick, who had been peering intently into the murky water ahead of them, grabbed Zoru's arm.

"Ahead and above us," he snapped. "I think I can spot subs heading toward the surface."

A second scrutiny convinced him. They had evidently arrived just as a squad of under-water killers was slicing up for the attack. He counted ten slim, shadowy lengths knifing through the water above. Past them he could see the dim outlines of more. They were a hundred yards above them and off fifty feet ahead of them. But every second was putting their deadly shadows farther away.

"We're too late!" he cried bitterly. "They're on their way. In another sixty seconds they'll be releasing torpedos, sinking our ships without warning, without a chance."

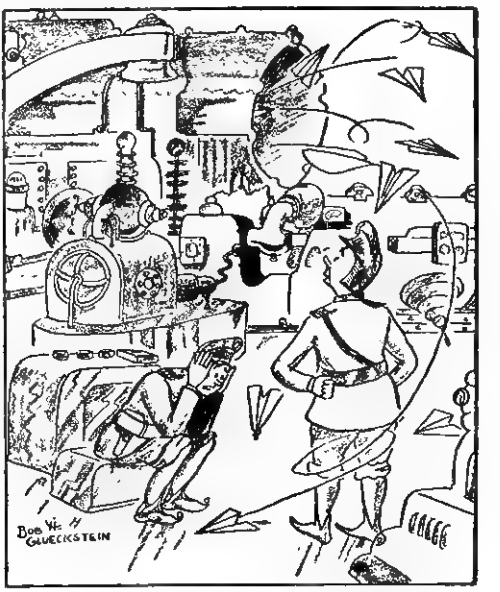
"Start firing!" Zoru said quietly.

"But—"

"Please do as I say," Zoru said insistently.

BRICK swung the barrel of the gun upward until it covered the area through which the submarine squad was slipping.

The control board of the gun was fitted with a firing lever and a small sparking button. Brick shoved the firing lever forward and heard the in-



"I can't understand it. The blueprints said it would turn out real rocket ships!"

ner mechanism of the gun begin to thrum into life.

At the tip of the gun's muzzle he saw a bubble forming, swelling and growing larger by the second. When it was almost ten feet in diameter it broke from the gun and flashed upward. Leaning forward Brick could trace its ascent through the murky water by the foaming stream of bubbles in its wake. In a second it reached the area of the silently moving submarine shadows.

"Use the spark!" Zoru snapped.

Brick's hand jammed on the sparking button, and a fiery pellet of flame streaked from the muzzle of the gun, streaking surface-ward like a miniature comet.*

And almost instantly the Crawler shuddered violently from the jarring force of a devastating explosion that churned the water about them into a maelstrom of furious turbulence.

Peering through the foaming water Brick saw a shadowy submarine turning slowly, almost lazily, on its side and settling toward the bottom, Half way down it collided with another sub, rebounded sluggishly from it and continued on its descent. The sub it had struck hesitated, then slipped backward and started down.

Brick tripped the firing lever again. The huge bubble formed swiftly, flashed away.

"Hydrogen and oxygen," Zoru said, "exist together in water. But separate them, as we have done, then touch one off with the other and you have an explosive of almost limitless power. The force of these hydrogen oxygen formations exploding next to a submarine will break its back."

"Fine," Brick said grimly.

He pressed the firing button, shooting another streak of electric flame upward. The explosion sounded like the muffled beat of a mighty drum.

The Crawler was still moving sluggishly forward, but with an adjustment of the controls Zoru stopped it.

Brick glanced at him inquiringly.

"I am afraid," Zoru said, "that we have missed the fleet. They have already cleared their docks and started up. If we had been an hour sooner we might have smashed the dock locks and bottled the submarines in their nests. Now we must look for them."

Brick peered up and cursed under his breath. There was nothing but an occasional fish to break the sameness of the green expanse. The squad they had sighted was out of range now.

ZORU turned the Crawler and headed back, but this time he veered out from the mighty structures

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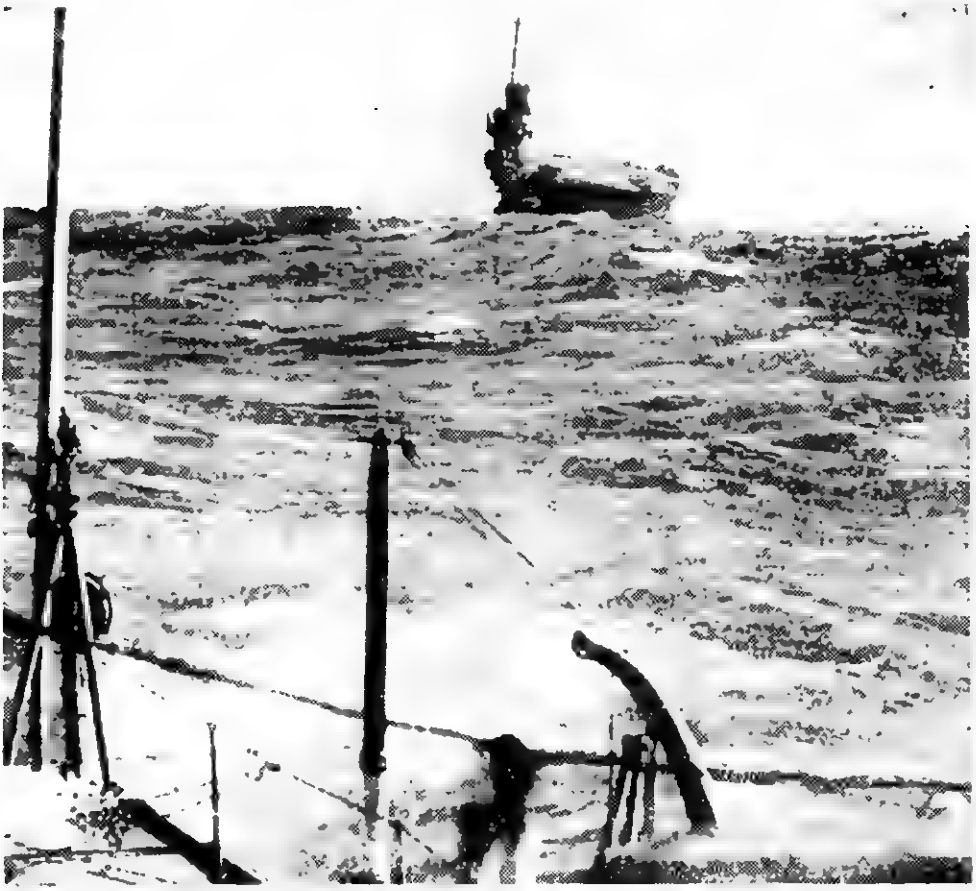
* Here it is obvious what the true nature of Zoru's weapon really is. Originally the fish-gun broke the water down into its component gases, but the hydrogen alone was used to stun the fish. Now, Zoru has adapted the gun so that his bubbles contain both hydrogen and oxygen, mixed, in huge quantity. Any high school student of chemistry can explain what happens to these two gases, when mingled and ignited. A terrible explosion of great power is possible through use of them.

Zoru here forms the bubbles electrolytically, then shoots a pellet of sodium at them. The result is a natural phenomenon. Sodium bursts into flame on contact with water, and the flame, in turn, entering the bubble, instantly sets off this potential "bomb" and the resultant explosion is sufficient to shatter everything for many yards around.

The effectiveness of Zoru's gun, in comparison to the depth bomb, is perhaps twenty-five times that of the explosive charge contained in the Navy's potent "cans."

Operated as it was, from the ocean floor, directly beneath the submarines, its effectiveness was hideously thorough. Once the bubble, flashing up to the surface, reached the proximity of the overhead submarine, it was set off, and the submarine was crushed like an eggshell by countless tons of pressure against its hull as dense water was hurled irresistibly away from the "bomb."

Even on the surface, four-hundred feet above, according to accounts later made by Navy officials, giant ships were tossed about like corks, and in one instance, a destroyer was sunk when its bottom was stove in.—Ed.



* In this photograph we see the H.M.S. "Glorious" rising at an angle almost incredible under the impetus of the exploding hydrogen bubbles released four hundred feet below the surface by Brick Harrington and his Atlantean companions in their Crawler. In the foreground can be seen boiling foam erupting from below.

of Atlantis until they faded into a shimmering blur behind them.

They heard occasional rumbling detonations, but it was impossible to guess their source. It was obvious from this that the attack, or phases of it, had started.

Brick swore violently and searched the waters about them with desperate impatience. Suddenly he saw myriad shadows materializing out of the green murk. In formations of five the vast fleet of shark-like subs were drifting over their heads. It was impossible to gauge the size or number of the underwater armada. As far as he could penetrate the dim water he could see them on all sides moving slowly, and slightly downward, holding their V formation as if they were welded together with invisible supports.

He guessed the reason for their downward angle. The rumbling explosions they had heard must have been depth charges dropped from British or American destroyers. The subs would have to keep below the range of the depth bombs or run the risk of having their seams blasted open.

They were probably maneuvering into position to attack the convoy from the rear.

Brick's hand closed on the firing lever.

"This is the pay-off," he said softly.

Zoru stopped the lurching motion of the Crawler and Leolo moved to the seat before the second gun. She smiled once at Brick and then with an almost vicious gesture she threw the firing lever forward.

Brick flashed a grin back at her and went to work. His hand slapped the lever and shifted to the sparking button without the loss of a second.

Two huge bubbles flashed away from the two muzzles, followed by hissing electric pellets. The double explosion crashed in their ears with deafening clamor.

A hundred yards above them a V formation of five subs was slammed together by its terrific force. One ship seemed to twist in agony before cracking in the middle and settling drunkenly.

Brick and Leolo worked the mechanism of the guns as fast as their hands could move. The huge bombs of hydrogen rocketed upward in a steady stream from the Crawler chased by the sizzling streaks of fiery sodium.

The close formation of the German fleet was its doom. The sledge hammer blasts of the hydrogen bombs transformed a mile square of ocean into a heaving, exploding inferno that ground and battered the subs in its terrible maw.

Zoru sprang to the controls and started the Crawler moving ahead at full speed. Brick flashed an approving nod at him. By changing their position they would be able to rake other sections of the vast fleet.

WITHOUT wasting a second Brick and Leolo continued to fire bomb after bomb into the bellies of the German underwater force. Their ears were ringing queerly from the constant barrage of mighty sound, and the shudderings of the Crawler under the impact of the explosions almost knocked them from their seats. The turtle-like construction of the Crawler was all that saved it from the tempest created by the tremendous detonations of the hydrogen bombs.

Brick paused long enough to glance up. The German fleet's geometric formation was shattered completely, and as far as he could see, the subs were milling wildly about like blind and wounded sharks.

Those that were still under control evidently realized that the barrage was coming from beneath them, for Brick saw dozens of subs pointing their noses up and slithering to the surface.

He redoubled his efforts with the hydrogen gun, working with a frantic fury. But another glance convinced him that the larger body of the fleet was moving up out of range and danger.

Leolo stopped firing and followed his gaze upward.

"Damn it!" Brick grated. "They're out of range."

Both guns were silent now but in a few moments again the thunder of explosions could be heard rumbling above them.

Zoru and Leolo listened bewilderedly, but Brick grinned joyously.

"We've driven the subs into depth bomb range," he cried. "There must be two-hundred destroyers above showering ashcans of dynamite down on them. We've caught them between a cross-fire."

In only a moment or so they could see the slim lengths of the subs again, coming into range as they sought to escape the merciless pounding from above. Many of them were listing wearily and settling out of control.

Brick and Leolo began firing. Into the disorganized turmoil of subs their hydrogen bombs blasted again and again, savagely, endlessly.

For another half hour they fired ceaselessly, driving the subs up to meet the depth charges again and again. But with every hydrogen bomb explosion there were less subs to slink upward. And every time the remnants of the once mighty underwater armada sought to slink away to the surface, the depth bombs took their terrible toll.

Brick's gun, hot in his hands, suddenly ceased firing.

"It's through," Zoru said, glancing at it. "The device that split the hydrogen has burned out probably."

Leolo ceased firing then, and a strange silence seemed to settle over them. There was still the rumble of depth charges, growing fainter by the minute, as the destroyers chased the fleeing subs; but beyond that there was nothing.

THEN they felt a faint jar shake the Crawler. And a faint noise that was like two huge mountains of stone grinding slowly together grew in their ears. It was not as loud as some of the explosions they had been hearing, but there was limitless infinity about it that was terrifying.

The Crawler was moving slowly ahead, and through the green murk Brick saw the spires and structures of Atlantis. Even as they sighted them, he saw one spire tremble and then fall slowly sideways and crash to the floor of the ocean. The Crawler was trembling steadily now.

"It was the same," Zoru whispered, twelve thousand years ago."

Brick remembered.

"Volcano?" he asked tensely.

Zoru nodded.

"The explosions must have started it again. It will not be long now."

Leolo, who had been gazing steadily at the beautiful city, suddenly tugged at Brick's arm.

"Look!" she cried pointing.

Brick followed her direction and saw a long black German sub crossing the spires of Atlantis and driving toward them. It was emblazoned with a huge swastika, and through the dim greenness Brick saw its numeral—U-95.

That he knew was Von Herrman's flagship.

With a mental vision he could picture the German commander, hysterically enraged at the failure of his attack, ordering his ship into a suicidal ramming of the Crawler. For there was no doubt that that was the intention of the huge submarine closing on them like a greedy shark.*

Brick put his arm about Leolo's

* Perhaps Von Herrman, at that moment, was the only man in the Nazi regime who knew that the fate of the Reich was sealed, that Germany had lost the Battle of the Atlantic, and the war itself. For from that day on, the tide turned against Germany, and with the flood of arms pouring to Britain, and to embattled Russia, the offensive changed sides.

With the destruction of the Atlantis submarine base, America's navy took over the Azores, Dakar, and joined forces with Britain at Singapore.

Within four months, Africa was in Allied hands, and Hitler had been driven from Iran. Harassed by furious Russian armies, released from the Eastern front with the submission of Japan, who never intended to fight, his army of the east disintegrated, and fell apart, a victim of Russia's vastness, coupled with her new armed might.

American Expeditionary Forces, and a British army, landing in Portugal, stormed through Spain and drove deep into France, aided by revived sons of the tricolor. Revolt flared all over Europe, and the war came to a sudden, stunning, abrupt halt with the assassination of Hitler at Berchtesgaden by Goebbels, and that worthy's suicide when trapped by members of Hitler's personal guard.

History will show, when all the facts are known, that the mightiest conqueror of all times met his end because of a grim battle four-hundred feet beneath the tossing Atlantic. After American aid was assured, unhindered, Hitler's power expended itself on the impossible task of waging a three-front war.—Ed.

shoulder, pulled her close to him.

"This looks like the end," he said grimly. "We had to go, but I hate to give Von Herrman the satisfaction of doing the job." He looked down at the silver-haired girl in his arms and smiled. "It would have been wonderful," he said huskily. "But nobody gets everything so I guess we don't have any kicks."

The structures of Atlantis were trembling and shaking, and the mighty forces beneath the ocean were growling an ominous warning.

Brick kissed the girl in his arms good-bye. Her lips were on his, poignantly sweet, when Zoru cried out behind them. Before Brick could turn it happened.

The ancient volcano of Atlantis erupted!

A BLINDING sheet of flame and steam and lava roared upward engulfing the crumbling towers and structures of Atlantis in its fiery maw. The water boiled angrily with the heat.

Brick saw Atlantis crumbling and disappearing before him, as it sank into the immense crater of the volcano on which it had rested.

He saw also, in the indescribable scene of vast convulsion, the destruction of Captain Von Herrman's submarine. It had been directly above Atlantis when the eruption occurred. And like a chip in a whirlpool, it had been sucked out of sight as the ocean rushed in to quench and fill the volcano forever.

That was all he saw. For a minor upheaval tossed the Crawler to its side, and then like the slap of a giant paw, hurled it upward.

For a dazed chaotic interval there was nothing but wild motion, boiling currents and the noise of the volcano around them. How long it lasted was impossible to tell. It was like some horrible nightmare, without beginning or end.

As the Crawler tossed through the heaving water, Brick managed to get an arm around Leolo and pull her close to him. Her body in his arms seemed the only real thing in a frenzied world of unreality.

He was still holding her tightly to his breast when the erratic movements of the Crawler were replaced by an even rocking, and the noise of the volcano, and the hiss of the boiling currents had faded away.

Reasoning was beyond him, but when he heard the metallic sound of the opening hatch he climbed to his feet, pulling Leolo with him. Zoru stood at the open hatchway and sunlight was breaking on his face.

Brick stumbled to his side. His arm was about Leolo and his heart was too full for words to express what he felt.

"Miraculous," breathed Zoru. "Miraculous deliverance!"

Looking out the hatch Brick saw a mighty cloud of smoke disappearing over the rim of the horizon. The convoy! From the Arsenal of Democracy blood for the veins of the British empire was flowing—safely still.

And then Brick saw an American destroyer standing against the cobalt sky, driving toward them. Above her the Stars and Stripes rippled in a stiff breeze. The sight brought a lump of pride to his throat.

He caught Zoru's hand in a strong clasp and his arm tightened about Leolo's shoulders. Zoru returned the pressure with his hand and Leolo smiled up at him, her eyes telling him the answers to questions he would ask later.

Then they turned and waited for the destroyer.

The Science of Suckers

By GERALD VANCE

Some amazing stories of the psychology of making use of those Barnum tabulated as "one born every minute"

AN Italian immigrant made the front pages of most of the nation's papers a few weeks ago by paying cash for all rights to the Information booth at Grand Central station. It seemed he wanted a nice busy spot for a fruit stand and a suave stranger was willing to arrange things for him.

This is not an unusual case. Every day it happens from one end of the country to the other. People are hoodwinked, swindled, tricked and fleeced with the monotonous regularity of a good clock.

You read all about it. You read of the farmer who buys the Empire State building and of the gentleman who secures an option covering all marine rights on the Hudson.

In glancing over these reports of the confidence men's victims, a person could not be blamed for assuming that, for the most part, truck drivers, immigrants, farmers, cow punchers and the like were the apple of the swindler's eye.

Because, for some reason, cases concerning these classes receive all of the publicity. On the other hand it is rarely that you hear or read of the bankers and brokers' contributions to the clip artists and shills.

Actually the cold, if somewhat disheartening fact is that the members of the so-called upper classes provide the gyps and fakers with most of their easily earned revenue.

The long record of their gullibility seems almost incredibly fantastic when it is realized that these same men have risen to the heads of huge corporations and are probably directing the destinies of thousands of their fellow human beings.

Take for instance the triumvirate of Jay Gould, Horace Greely and Colonel Thomas A. Scott, vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

All were financiers and businessmen of the highest order and the first water. Considering this, the swindle that a man masquerading as Lord Gordon-Gordon perpetrated on them is almost beyond belief.

LORD GORDON-GORDON arrived in the United States in 1871 and announced his intention of buying railroads—just a few dozen, that is. Of course this caused a considerable ripple in railroading circles.

Officials of the Northern Pacific conducted him on a tour of their road, wining and dining him sumptuously at every opportunity. Of course Lord Gordon-Gordon was not allowed to pay for even his chewing gum. When he parted company with the brilliant members of the Northern Pacific, they presented him with a warm letter to Horace Greely.

Finding this gentleman in confer-

ence with Jay Gould and Colonel Scott when he arrived, Lord Gordon-Gordon blandly announced that he had assumed control of 60,000 shares of Erie stock, enough to give him control of the next election of the board.

Messrs. Gould, Scott and Greely leaped to their feet, astounded. Apparently they accepted the man's statement with the same credulity displayed by the native of Broad Corners, Nebraska when offered a real "bargain" on the Chrysler building.

Lord Gordon-Gordon magnanimously decided to leave Jay Gould in charge of things, and in gratitude for this, Mr. Gould proceeded to purchase for Lord Gordon-Gordon twenty thousand additional shares of stock. Lord Gordon-Gordon was grateful, but refused to make out a receipt for the stock, insisting haughtily that his word alone was sufficient.

Impressed by all this, Jay Gould deposited 40,000 more shares with the masterful Lord Gordon-Gordon.

All in all a half-million dollars was transferred blindly to the bogus Englishman without receipts or records of any kind of the transactions.

Jay Gould capped the climax on this episode by tendering his resignation from the board and from the presidency of the Erie to Lord Gordon-Gordon, who had no business with either.

Lord Gordon-Gordon sold the securities on Wall street, and before the brilliant trio of Gould, Scott and Greely woke up, he had skipped to Canada.

ANOTHER instance of a swindle that took a number of America's shrewdest investors to the cleaners is the famous Ralston diamond affair.

Two bearded prospectors entered the Bank of California and deposited a bag full of diamonds, sapphires, emeralds and rubies in a safety deposit vault. The bank's president, William Ralston was so impressed with the glittering stones that he readily agreed to buy out the miner's interests in the mines from which the stones were alleged to have come.

Seven hundred thousand dollars was raised and dumped into the laps of the bearded prospectors who promptly and happily disappeared for all time. Then the sad truth became known. There weren't any mines, property or interests of any sort. Ralston, together with such notables as Baron Rothchild and George B. McClellan, had paid seven-hundred-thousand out to perfect strangers on the strength of a bag full of stones worth about twenty-thousand dollars. The bearded con men must have chuckled over that one for some time.

British royalty was taken for a sleigh ride by one of the most successful gyp artists of all time, Whitaker Wright. Wright organized company after company to mine gold in Australia. Each separate company was heavily financed by members of the British nobility. No one seemed interested enough to notice that the magnificent plans on paper never got any further than that.

When the bubble broke, Wright was far away in America enjoying himself immensely.

Among others the Prince of Wales was duped by this charming charlatan while spending a few weeks on board his yacht.

Of course the story of Ivar Krueger is well known, but perhaps it is not so well known that many of the largest brokerage houses in this country and others bought Krueger stock without even the formality of glancing at the contracts. When it was learned that the Krueger financial empire was based on spurious figures and watered stock,

these investment and brokerage houses screamed to high heaven — because they hadn't taken the normal logical precaution of looking before they leaped.

The famous case of Coster-Musica, head of McKesson and Robbins wholesale drug concern is another glaring example of the amazing gullibility of the supposedly shrewd American business man. Coster was originally a bootlegger, but when this business slumped he started a company called the United States Hair Co. His manipulations with this outfit cost him three years in prison, but he emerged to cloak his identity and arrange a million-dollar loan with Canadian bankers to buy outright the McKessons Robbin Drug Co. Five years later the water bloated company floated a ten-million dollar issue and expanded further.

The president, F. Donald Coster (formerly Musica) was written up in Who's Who in America with a fabricated autobiography which covered his true identity and making him a student for the M.D. and Ph.D. degrees at Heidleberg University, Germany, during the years he was spending less scholastically in the klink.

When the overcapitalization of the firm finally blew it sky high, it ended the Jekyll and Hyde existence of Coster-Musica, but only after he had masqueraded for sixteen years as not only one of the pillars of society, but also of business and medicine.

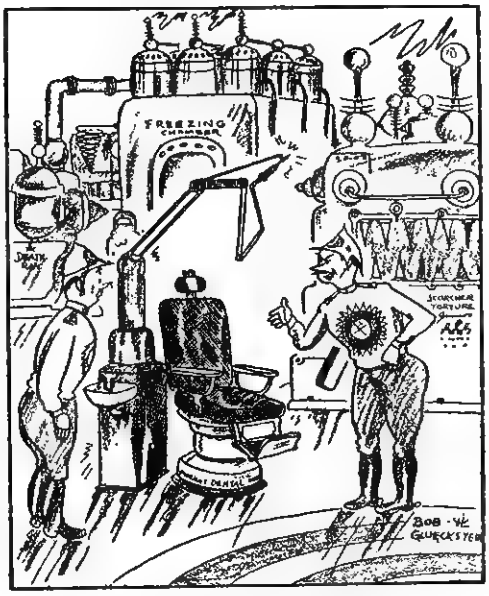
THESE swindles were perpetrated on intelligent, shrewd business men, not Minnesota farmers. Also they took advantage of the Great American Businessman at his own game. While it is startling to realize the lack of intelligence often displayed in business by men who should know better, it is positively breath-taking to watch these same business men open their checkbooks and move into the world of art. The blunders they make then are hopelessly stupid.

In 1935 five American millionaires paid approximately three-hundred-thousand dollars apiece for copies of Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, in the belief they were buying the original for a song.

Spurious autographs, books, paintings, sculpture and furniture have been peddled successfully to American buyers with more money than common sense.

But individuals have not been alone in this. Many recognized and reputable institutions of learning and culture have become innocent parties to such frauds by accepting and buying objects of art which their critics and experts mistakenly assumed were original.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, many European museums and several leading private collectors such as William Randolph Hearst and Helen



"Here's a horrible little torture outfit I picked up down on the Earth!"

Clay Frick were taken in by one of the cleverest forgers the world will ever know, Alceo Dossena, Italian sculptor. This artist, however, was the innocent tool of unscrupulous art dealers who for about ten years sold his work as genuine Renaissance art. As late as 1938 a controversy still raged as to the genuineness of a tomb for which the Boston Museum of art had paid one hundred thouand dollars in the belief that it was by a great Renaissance sculptor.

Actually Dossena did the job and was paid about two hundred dollars for his pains. The exposure of Dossena caused a great deal of consternation in some of the highest circles of art. Museums which had paid fabulous prices for his forgeries hurriedly moved them into the darkest corners of their warehouses and proceeded to forget the entire matter.

Although Van Dyke only painted about seventy pictures there are at least two thousand "genuine" Van Dykes in existence, some of them hanging in the World's best galleries.

The same is true of Corot. In fact someone said that of the three thousand Corots, eight thousand are in the United States and six thousand are in England—only Corot didn't paint three thousand pictures.

Another recent fraud was turned up in France by its perpetrator who had been only amusing himself and seeing how far he could go. This harmless wag was an Italian sculptor, Francesco Cremonse, who buried a Venus missing a nose and legs in the pasture of a French peasant near St. Etienne, in south-central France. When it was plowed up in 1938, it was accepted by critics as bearing a perfect example and priceless relic of the Roman invasion of Gaul centuries before. The Venus was installed in the Louvre and clas-

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sified as one of the art treasures which must never leave the country. Then Cremsone came forward with the missing nose and legs and also the night club singer who had posed for him.

As soon as the fraud was known the art critics, with many blushes, consigned the legless Venus to Oblivion.

And so it goes. The bigger they are the harder they fall. The more money they have the more they have to lose.

So the next time you read of the sale of the Brooklyn bridge to some trusting son of the soil, remember that the same thing happens daily, only on an infinitely more expensive scale, to the fellows who're laughing the loudest—the great American Businessmen.

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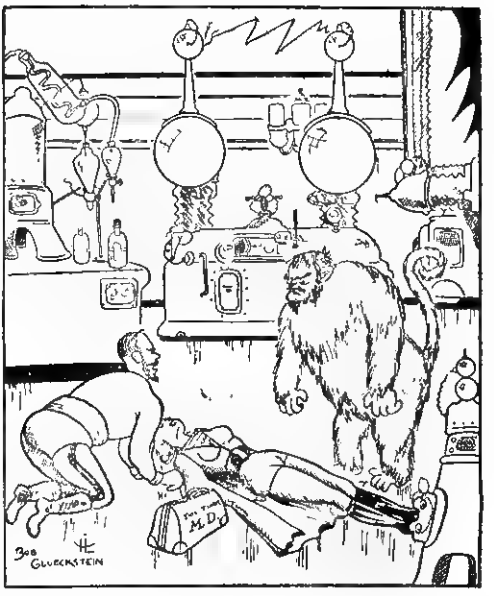

"What did you do? Smile at her?"

Office memo: Atten. Editor Amazing Stories:

Please see that the January issue of your magazine carries something very special for your readers. Something sensational that will surprise and delight them. But keep it secret. The publishers

BANDITS OF TIME

The lottery for mates in Tork's New Era of two million and ten A.D. . . . Tork ready to address his people . . . And now Rhodana glides forward, the light glinting on the blade in her hand . . . Greggson sees her, gestures, raises his weapon . . . By some miracle, Tork is aware of the danger . . . He whirls . . . A ray spits from his belt . . . Greggson's body falls . . .

A mutter of angry men surging forward . . . Greggson -one of them! . . . Revolt in the New World!

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DECEMBER ISSUE

AMAZING STORIES

AT ALL NEWSSTANDS OCTOBER 10th!

The Origin of Some VERY STRANGE CUSTOMS

by GUY FAULDES

Here are some of the amazing things that we humans do without much reason to them—and *why* we do them

ALTHOUGH none of us imagine that we live in anything but a modern world, in everyday existence there are countless terms and numberless customs which we use and practice automatically, never realizing that we are dating our civilization by using quaint mannerisms which have been carried through centuries.

The fact that the methods of many waiters in the most fashionable dining places, for example, date back to the days of King Louis XIV. The kitchens in the Palace of Versailles, those days, were so far removed from the vicinity of the royal suite of gourmand Louis, that food was carried to his chambers in heated silver platters covered by heated domed covers. In order to keep from burning themselves, and yet keep a bit of swank to the proceedings, the footmen wore thick white gloves in the process. Other eating places in France, learning of this court practice, quickly picked it up. It's been with us ever since.

Then, of course, we all recognize the practice of wearing dark mourning clothing on the demise of someone near as something very prevalent in this modern age. But in reality, the custom of wearing mourning clothing is especially ancient. In the first chapter of Genesis, and all through the Bible, such practice is constantly referred to. The Chinese, who have observed this custom for countless centuries, wore white as mourning garb. The Egyptians chose yellow to symbolize grief over death, and the Turks clad themselves in violet to symbolize the anguish they felt at losing their dear ones.

Everyone has seen a newsreel, at one time or another, in which a bottle of champagne, water, or what have you is used to christen a ship. This dates farther back than fish can remember. The ancients observed similar rites in consecrating their ships to the gods whose images they carried, dashing goblets of wine or similar liquids over the prows of their crafts.

"Let's give the little girlie a hand," is a phrase that goes back a lot more years than many imagine. Applause, as we know it today, originated with the Romans, who had a special standard ritual in expressing approval of public entertainments. They snapped their fingers and thumbs, clapped their palms together, waved handkerchiefs, and—this should interest collegiate cheerleaders—chanted rhythmic vocal delight.

If you don't do it yourself, you must know someone who knocks on wood when he means, "I hope, I hope, I hope." But there isn't a thing particularly modern about this gesture. It's based upon a very old custom of touching wood whenever good fortune or happiness came to a person. Upon this basis, and through close idea association, touching or knocking on wood finally became to be thought of as an especially fine means of protection. At first, it was merely to symbolize the fact that Christ died on a wooden cross.

Brides and bridegrooms are very seldom able to dodge the inevitable shower of rice that is hurled on them as they leave the place of their wedding. But they can blame the stuff that gets in their hair and down their collars on a custom originating in ancient India. It was—and still is—practiced similarly there on weddings, where showering of rice is a symbol of a happy marriage blessed with many children. Rice is a symbol of fecundity in India.

In spite of the fact that many of us scoff at it, the superstitious custom of regarding the

number "13" as definitely unlucky, it is still carried to an absurdity by thousands of otherwise modern minded persons in the world today. They might become a wee bit red behind the ears when they learn that the superstition is timeworn with antiquity. Although it hasn't ever been placed for certain, some authorities trace this superstition back to the time of the last Supper when the Lord and His Disciples numbered thirteen at the banquet table. Other historians go farther back than that, however, placing the origin in the lap of Norse mythology which relates that Loki once broke in uninvited to a banquet at Valhalla and made the number of guests thirteen in all. Later, Balder, one of the guests at the feast, was unfortunately "rubbed out" by enemies.

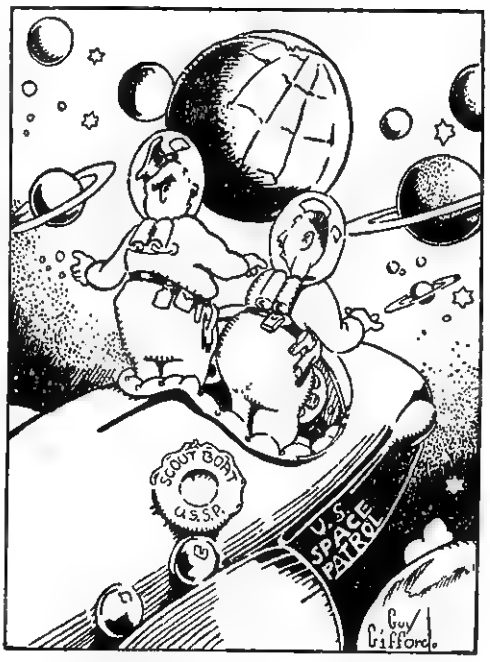
"Down on the farm," you still run into houses or barns which have horseshoes nailed over their doorways. This supposedly lucky practice has been traced to the ancient Romans who used to drive nails into the walls of their houses in order to avert the plague. Later, this custom, plus the fact that the horseshoe resembled a halo, resulted in horseshoes being added to the nail—so that devils and evil spirits could be successfully warded off.

And if you gentlemen will pause to take a look at your coat lapels, you'll see small notches in them. No, in spite of what you might think, these notches aren't just a fashion styling brought into demand by tailors. Notches in lapels were first originated as a result of a rivalry between General Moreau and Napoleon. In order to distinguish their group unsuspiciously, Moreau's backers hit upon lapel notches as a clever way to signify the followers of their own party. Later, they carried on as part of style in clothing.

Probably the most generous and erroneously modern custom in practice today is that of "bridal showers" in which young ladies about to be wed are feted at an affair by friends who give her various can-opening utensils which will make housekeeping more simple. This custom is said to have originated back in Holland several hundreds of years ago when a Dutch pappy refused to hand over dowry dough to his daughter if she persisted in marrying an impoverished young chap whom he thoroughly detested. Chums of the unhappy couple, feeling that the old man was playing a nasty trick on them, put their heads together and worked out a scheme by which the first "bridal shower" was given. They gave the girl and her future husband enough gifts to set up housekeeping in spite of the Dutch daddy's stinginess.

Seven year's bad luck is the fate that many of us today believe lies in store for anyone breaking a mirror. However, since the very origin of the mirror itself, ancients used to engage in flim-flam by which they tried to see into the future through use of the glass. Consequently, when a witch doctor broke a mirror, it was thought that the gods didn't want him to see into the future because of some bad luck that was about to befall him. Hence the origin of the superstition.

And in these modern times of stress, world strife, and conscription, there is much talk about modernization in war. However, it is ironic that one of the first things a soldier is taught on entering camp is a military ritual dating all the way back to the days of knights and ladies: the hand salute. In those ancient robust times, when feudal jousting tournaments were a festive occasion, a Queen of Love and Beauty was generally chosen to reign over the goings-on until the end of the tournament. As the knights passed in parade before the throne of the tournament beauty, they raised their mailed fists, shading their eyes and hinted gallantly that the lusciousness of the reigning Queen of Love and Beauty was dazzling on the eyes. What lonely soldier, if he realized this, would fail to work it into his "line" in meeting a pretty damsel?



"That's peculiar. According to the course we set, this should be La Guardia Field."

NICOLBEE'S NIGHTMARE

Nicolbee had nightmares; but his life was a nightmare too, and sometimes he couldn't tell them apart, or which was most real . . .

by JOHN YORK CABOT

"LOOK," said Joe Nicolbee, pointing his finger at his wife that Friday night after they had finished a mediocre meal, "why don't you go to the show alone?"

Agnes Nicolbee hesitated only an instant. She looked at the litter of dirty dishes lying about the kitchen table.

"What about these dinner dishes?" she asked.

"You go to the show," Joe Nicolbee repeated. "I'll do 'em."

Agnes smiled happily. This was just what she wanted.

"I'll call the girls," she said rising "and see if they'll go with me."

She paused to pat Joe Nicolbee's head fondly before leaving him there in the kitchen. She still thought this gesture pleased him. "You don't mind staying home alone, honey?" she asked.

Joe Nicolbee sighed.

"No," he said. "I don't mind. You'd better hurry." And with faintly cynical amusement he watched his wife hurry out of the kitchen. He could hear her dialing a telephone rapidly in the hall off the living room.

A few seconds later her voice floated faintly to him, carefully muffled so that he couldn't make out any of the conversation. But Joe Nicolbee didn't care to hear the conversation. He knew Agnes wasn't calling any of the "girls". He'd known it for over three years now. It didn't bother Joe Nicolbee because it had been longer than three years since he'd been silly enough to give a damn about Agnes.

It was Joe Nicolbee's silent prayer that Agnes would stop being a fool some day and divorce him. But no, she wasn't the type to be honest enough for that. Joe Nicolbee sighed and contemplated the litter of dirty dishes on the table.

They were a part of Joe Nicolbee's unpleasant existence. Just as much a part as Agnes, his dull job at the department store, his stupid, meddlesome neighbors, and the endless scrimping and saving that meant getting along. They were just as much a part of Joe's existence as the daily newspapers that screamed of horror and bloodshed and war and persecution. Just as much an integral part of Joe Nicolbee's life as breathing.

Agnes came back into the kitchen a little later to kiss Joe on the forehead and say good-bye. Joe watched her leave, a curious mixture of scorn and amusement on his features.

In his dream, Nicolbee saw the loveliest woman imagination had ever fashioned

"Have a good time with the girls," he called after her. It pleased him to say that. One of the small remaining pleasures was the realization that Agnes was so stupid she thought she was getting away with something.

He heard the door close, yawned, and stood up, mechanically arranging the dishes to pile them in the sink. He'd have a smoke after he finished these, and then pile into bed. Then he could get back to his dreams.

JOE NICOLBEE enjoyed dreaming. You might say he was good at it. For as far back as he could recall, Joe had never slept without dreams.

When he was a little kid, he used to dream that he was a knight in armor, riding a great horse and wearing a plumed helmet. He was the hero who rescued plenty of fair maidens. Later, when Joe was at school, he'd dream he was the campus hero, an All American halfback, or a brilliant Phi Beta Kappa scholar. But of course he was never really any of these.

Joe Nicolbee was unfortunately a pretty ordinary person. He was ordinary, that is, according to the shape and standards of worldly values. No one expected Joe Nicolbee to emerge into the limelight as a world beater, a Great Person. And he never did.

As he went through life no one seemed surprised that he wasn't setting the world ablaze. No one seemed surprised to see him becoming more and more a microscopic nonentity in the scheme of things. Joe wasn't surprised either. He had long grown used to the fact that his dreams never approached reality.

"Hell," he told himself, "I'm just Joe Nicolbee."

When Joe had gotten his job at the department store he'd had dreams of some day ascending to great heights in commerce. And about that time Joe was dreaming of a wonderful girl to make life blissfully complete.

Joe married Agnes, and for the first time thought he'd come pretty close to equaling in reality what he'd had in his dream world. But even Agnes proved a dud. It had been just wishful thinking that made him think she was the girl he'd seen in his dream life. Once he had tried to tell Agnes about his dreams.

"Joe Nicolbee," she said, "no wonder you never amount to a darn. You spend all your time snoring, off in a never-never land. Wonderful dreams, bah! No wonder you toss all night. Probably indigestion. If you'd stop all that nonsense you'd have more time for practical things. Why don't you dream how to get a promotion?"

So Joe Nicolbee's expression had grown a little grim and he hadn't said anything to Agnes after that. But he didn't stop dreaming. Even after Joe got a pay cut instead of the promotion Agnes was always pushing him after, he kept on dreaming. Maybe he even spent more time at it.

For it seemed that the tougher the stark, unpleasant realities of life got for Joe Nicolbee the more he would dream himself away from them. He was that sort of a person.

Where some men came home nights and spent the after-dinner hours busily engaged in putting stamps in books or working over a birdhouse in a basement workshop, Joe Nicolbee got to bed just as fast as he could and dreamed. It was really his hobby.

The few acquaintances Joe Nicolbee had used to jokingly say that he spent all his waking hours away from work in sleep. Which finally got to be pretty much the truth of the matter.

Like this particular Friday night.

Joe finished drying the dishes and

smoked a couple of cigarettes in the living room, thanking God that he didn't have to put up with his wife's stupid chatter this evening. He even got a sort of savage delight in picturing Agnes boring the hell out of some other man.

And then, about eight o'clock, Joe Nicolbee combed his hair very carefully, brushed his teeth, put on his best pajamas, and went to bed. Joe always liked to look his best in his dreams, and took pains getting ready for them. Joe was no insomniac. Through long practice he had learned how to get right off to sleep. He was snoring in five minutes.

IT WAS a vast, incredibly beautiful forest in which Joe Nicolbee found himself. From the glorious rust and yellow colorings of the trees that surrounded him, and the crispness of the air and the leaves beneath his feet, Joe Nicolbee knew that this was autumn. He stood in the center of a great avenue of these trees, and they were slanted by smoky shafts of sunshine. Looking upward at the huge arch this made, Joe Nicolbee thought of a cathedral he'd seen once when he was a kid.

It was as silent, and as cool, and as peaceful as a cathedral. Joe stood there, drinking in the smoky sunshine, letting his eyes feast on the gorgeous colors and his body tingle to the crispness of the air.

There wasn't a sound save for the excited hammering of Joe Nicolbee's heart.

And then a voice spoke, close to his ear and momentarily startling.

"You are Joe Nicolbee?" the voice said.

Joe wheeled, the clear, low, liquid beauty of the voice still ringing in his ears. Joe wheeled, and saw the loveliest woman ever fashioned by the gods of glamour.

His mouth was open slightly, and he was almost choking on the pounding of his heart. The lovely creature was smiling at him, her hands extended. Her lips were the richly wonderful redness of rare coral, and her teeth were as white and perfect as the freshly split center of a ripe cocoanut. Her skin was tinted with the faintest tan, and her ash-blonde hair haloed a face face that beggared the beauty of the ages.

And again she said,

"Joe Nicolbee. I have waited for you."

"But you," Joe Nicolbee stammered at last, "you, you are—"

"You don't recognize me, Joe Nicolbee?" she asked.

"I do," Joe Nicolbee said quickly, "I do, but yet I can't remember where, or when—"

"Where or when?" the girl smiled. "What does it matter where or when we have met before?"

Joe Nicolbee stood there silently, his heart hammering harder than before. The very beauty of the girl was stronger than drink, more magnificently intoxicating than nectar.

"Perhaps it was in another age," she said softly. "Or perhaps it was in a world you never had." Her voice was more than music.

"You are—" Joe Nicolbee began again.

"You can call me Naya," the girl said. "Names mean little." She moved closer to him.

Joe Nicolbee knew that his arms were around this girl, and that his lips were pressed to hers, and that he was shaken by the very thunder of his heart. The forest was swimming beneath his feet and the gloriously colored trees were whirling faster, faster—

A HAND gripped Joe's shoulder, long nails carelessly biting into his flesh. He pushed himself up on one elbow, groggily, and blinked into the harsh unpleasantness of the bedroom light.

Agnes stood over him. She took her hand from his shoulder. There was the reek of cheap alcohol on her breath. Her crazy dishpan hat was slightly askew on her head, and stringy locks of hair thrust out annoyingly from under the brim.

"All you do is sleep," she said. Joe noted that she spoke a trifle thickly. Her cheap lipstick was smeared at the corners of her red mouth.

"What time is it?" Joe Nicolbee asked automatically, his eyes still fixed distastefully on his wife.

"What difference does it make?" Agnes demanded. "All I did was stop on the way home from the show. I had a drink at Helen's place." She glared defensively at him.

Joe Nicolbee just looked at her, masking the emotions he felt. He sat up on the edge of the bed, rumpling his hand through his hair. It was clear to him that his wife's infidelity was beginning to wear on even her calloused conscience. This amused him slightly.

"Well?" his wife demanded harshly. "Why don'cha say something? Why don'cha yell at me? Go ahead. Yell at me!" Her voice rose shrilly.

"You have to see the neighbors every day," Joe Nicolbee reminded her, "not me. Go on and scream. Give them something to whisper about."

This sobered his wife somewhat. She put her red-nailed hand to her forehead, and stood there swaying slightly.

"I feel kinda sick," Agnes observed.

Her husband regarded her unsympathetically.

"That's too bad."

She moved weakly to the doorway, turning there to glare venomously at him again.

"You sleep too damn much," she muttered. "You and your crazy dreams."

Joe Nicolbee watched her move out of sight. He heard the bathroom door slam. He fished for a cigarette on the scarred night table beside his bed, and lighting it noticed that his hands shook slightly. But he knew it wasn't due to Agnes. In the back of his mind there was the picture of the glorious creature who called herself Naya.

"Where or when?" Naya's liquidly cooling voice came to him again. "What does it matter where or when we have met before?"

Joe Nicolbee shook his head, and a sickening wave of despair and bitter resentment swept over him. Into this, the most utterly magnificent dream he'd ever had, wretched reality—in the form of Agnes—had stepped to shatter the glorious world completely. If Joe hadn't despised Agnes, he'd have throttled her then and there.

Even after Joe heard the door to Agnes' room slam and the key turn in the lock, he didn't get back to sleep. He couldn't, for the picture of Naya, and the beauty of the incredibly wonderful forest was still in his mind.

It was like nothing that had ever happened to him—even in other dreams before. It left him shaken, trembling, his brain restlessly trying to hurl itself back to that dream world. It was like a terrible and inexplicable hunger.

THE ash tray on the nightstand was heaped with cigarette stubs, when Joe finally rose from his position on the edge of the bed and walked over and snapped off the light. It wasn't necessary any longer. Morning had come.

Joe didn't eat breakfast. He dressed

hurriedly, thanking God that Agnes was sleeping off her hangover and wouldn't hear him. He didn't want to have to look at her face. It was worse in the morning.

For the first time since he'd been down with a bad attack of flu some four years previously, Joe Nicolbee didn't go to work at the department store. He walked aimlessly, mingling with the early morning workbound crowds, his eyes flicking past them unseeingly. The torment and longing in his brain grew maddeningly greater.

Joe Nicolbee had no conscious realization of time passing. But it was dark when his footsteps finally took him wearily up the walk of his little cottage hours later. The turmoil in his soul was now a feverish yearning and incessant throbbing that wouldn't let him rest. His body was dead from fatigue, but in his brain there still blazed the picture of his dream world, the memory of Naya.

Agnes wasn't at home, and Joe moved wearily through the living room, climbing the stairs to his bedroom like a man in a trance. He didn't bother even to remove his shoes or clothing as he threw himself on his bed. It seemed to him as if his mind would never cease its torment, never cease its whirling, never let him sleep, never let him—

THE keen tingling intoxication of the forest air was again in Joe Nicolbee's nostrils. And this time his entrance into the glorious world of dreams was somehow very different from any he had ever experienced before. It seemed to Joe Nicolbee, as he stood there in the gorgously colored forest once again, that he had *awakened* from another and evil dream to find himself here.

Joe blinked his eyes, gazing about in mingled excitement and expectation. It occurred to him that this was also the first time in all his dreams that he had ever been twice to the same dream world. His pulses hammered feverishly. He hadn't lost Naya. He hadn't lost this beautiful world.

Naya, suddenly, was before him, smiling.

"Joe Nicolbee," she said, "you have returned. I knew you would."

"I thought I had lost you, forever," Joe said huskily.

Naya shook her head.

"You are just beginning to find me. You are just beginning to enjoy this world." She took him by the hand and they walked beneath the tall archway of trees.

"You have had trouble," Naya said after a moment's silence. "But do not let bad dreams disturb you."

"Bad dreams?" Joe Nicolbee gasped, recalling the thought that had occurred to him but a moment ago. "But this is a dream."

Naya nodded as solemnly as a little child.

"Yes," she said. "This is a dream. But you will learn more."

Joe Nicolbee walked on in silence, the closeness of Naya as beautiful, as splendid, as symphonic music to his soul. They came to a clearing, and far in the distance mountains were visible, shrouded faintly in soft, fleecy clouds.

Naya pointed upward to the mountains. Joe saw through the white cotton mists that the towers of a magnificent castle were visible.

"That is ours," Naya said. "It has been waiting for us."

Joe Nicolbee held her hand a little more firmly. Tears were in his eyes.

AGNES was standing over him again when Joe woke up. It had been her persistent pulling at his ear that jarred him back into his world of ob-

noxious reality. He still remembered entering the magnificent castle with Naya, of strolling through the richly adorned halls and past the towering marble staircases, of placing his arm around her slim waist—

"Where have you been all day?" his wife's sharply voiced query cut knife-like through the glorious haze that still webbed Joe's brain.

"You weren't at work," she went on accusingly. "You were out all day. I was nearly crazy."

Joe noticed by her breath that she had staved off the madness she spoke of by a few drinks.

"You'll be lucky to get your job back at the store," she shrilled angrily. "And it's all because of those crazy dreams. Dreams, dreams, dreams! I think you're losing your mind."

Joe resisted an impulse to hurl something into her overpainted face. He picked up the water glass on the night table, gulped a drink. He cleared his throat, fighting back the rage and frustration he felt. He spoke evenly, grimly.

"I wish you'd get the hell out of this room," he told her.

Agnes stepped back, slightly aghast. This was the first time Joe had ever shown temper. Maybe he knew what she'd been up to. Maybe he—

"You aren't well," she said hastily. "You don't know what you're saying. Those crazy dreams. I talked to the druggist about you. He said those crazy dreams are nervous trouble and indigestion. He gave me something you've got to take." Suddenly she looked down at the water glass on the night table. She stopped.

"I wish to God," Joe Nicolbee said, rising, "that those dreams of mine, especially these last, were reality. I wish to God that this was nothing more than a nightmare."

His wife was gaping at him, a curious expression frozen on her face.

Joe Nicolbee went on.

"Maybe they *are* reality. Maybe this hellish existence with you *is* nothing more than a nightmare. . Maybe my *real* life is in my so-called dreams. Maybe *you* are nothing more than a figment of some very bad dreams I've had."

Agnes was speaking, her face was white with terror.

"You *are* crazy," she said, backing away. She looked again at the glass on the night table. "Maybe it's that drug that made you crazy. Maybe that was all you needed to set you off. Ohhhh, I'm sorry I got it. I'm sorry I got it!" Her voice was a shrill, regretful wail.

Joe Nicolbee's eyes flew to the glass. He stepped forward, a horrible premonition in the back of his mind.

"What about that glass?" he demanded. "What are you talking about? Did you put a drug in it?" He grabbed his wife's arm roughly.

"He—the druggist—gave me some pills. They were to stop your dreaming for good. They—" she faltered, almost limp with terror.

"Stop my dreaming?" Joe shouted aghast. "Stop my dreaming?"

"I was to put two in there, every night," Agnes said shakenly, the fumes from her breath nauseatingly alcoholic, "but I put them all, all eight of them, into it tonight. Now you drank them!"

Joe Nicolbee, eyes blazing in wild rage, felt his hands reaching for his wife's throat. This was too much. This was beyond endurance. This was—

A sudden, overwhelming drowsiness seized Joe Nicolbee. He felt his hands dropping away from his wife before they'd reached her throat. The room was spinning in pinpoints of light. He

sank to the floor, the room still whirling.

WHEN Joe Nicolbee opened his eyes, he was cushioned on a drifted bed of gloriously colored leaves in the cathedral-like forest. There was the intoxicating freshness of tingling air in his nostrils.

"It is all right, Joe Nicolbee," Naya's voice said.

Joe blinked sleepily, then he saw that the girl sat beside him. She was smiling softly, and her voice was like the singing of angels.

"You have dreamed," she said. "But you will dream no more. You will have no more nightmares."

Joe looked at the girl bewilderedly.

"But the other world," he said, "was it—"

"Was it reality?" Naya finished for him. She smiled. "Just because it was unpleasant was no reason for it to be reality. You will dream no more. There will be no more nightmares. You have made this your reality. So why should it not be so?"

Joe Nicolbee took the girl in his arms. He thought for a fleeting instant of the creature back in rea— in the nightmare—and smiled. She had said there would be no more dreaming. And there wouldn't be, ever again.

ARABIAN NIGHTS UP TO DATE!

Infra-red light is a scientific term today! It is used in photography, in piercing fog, and in the laboratory. But maybe the ancient genii of Bagdad knew something about science too. Anyway, this particular genie wasn't very happy about being the slave of a lamp no one could see —much less rub, and thus put him to work! And that's all he wanted: a job! But a thousand years difference in time makes a difference in jobs . . . which he soon found out. Let author William P. McGivern tell you the story of "AL ADDIN AND THE INFRA-RED LAMP" in the

NOVEMBER ISSUE

fantastic ADVENTURES

ON SALE AT ALL NEWSSTANDS SEPT. 19

The Stevedore

There before him lay the grim figure of a skeleton

# of Jupiter

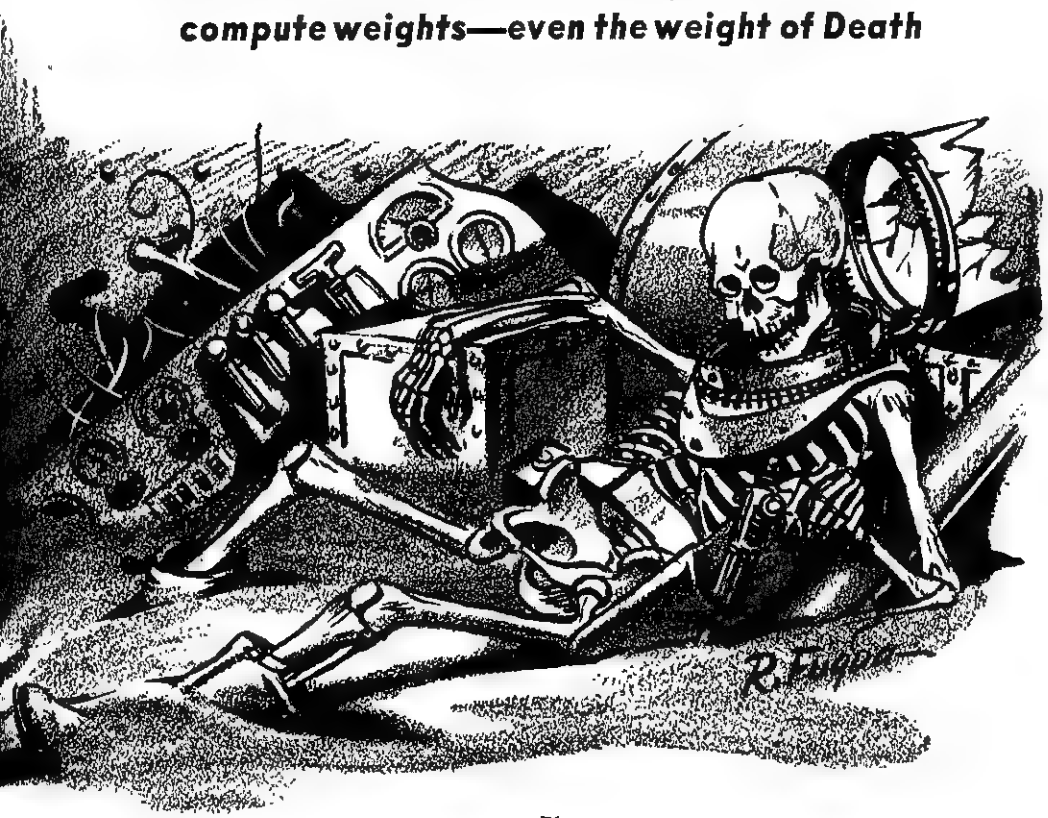
by DON WILCOX

SNAP it up. Get that stuff loaded!" It was the season of storms—not a favorable time for a salvaging expedition. But Captain Branaugh was an impatient man. So he ignored the danger.

The silver sands swept through these bad lands of Jupiter, scouring the copper-red crags and illuminating the air with a satin-silver glow. The gray old abandoned hull that had once been a space freighter had weathered eighteen years of these sand storms and it looked it. But the name, *John Heen,* painted on the prow, could still be distinguished.

Captain Branaugh and his mate of the brand new freighter, *Hanover,* had

THERE was something strange about Jupe. Was he really of Jupiter? But the oddest thing was the uncanny way he could compute weights—even the weight of Death



handpicked six seasoned thugs to make up their six-man army of guards. They had filled out their crew with three desert-skilled workmen, one of them a veteran of an earlier expedition to this planet.

One additional pickup, however, had occurred at a lonely oasis here on Jupiter, where the expedition had made a preliminary stop to replenish their water supply. There Captain Branaugh had picked up "Jupe."

The heavy end of the job of transferring the cargo of the *John Heen* to the hold of Branaugh's gleaming *Hanover* fell to Jupe. For Jupe was young and willing and able.

"What wouldn't I give for some of his muscle!" said Stephens, the youngest of the three workmen.

"Better not tell your blonde girlfriend about him, Steve," said Peterson, unrolling a drum of steel cable.

"He's different from any native Jupiterian I ever saw before," said Keller. "I spent two years up here with Captain Heen and I saw a lot of them—too many."

"I am differment," said Jupe, smiling proudly at being able to take part in a foreigner's conversation. "I am a castout."

"Wonder where he learned to speak English," Peterson said.

"No telling," said Keller, "if he's an outcast from his own tribe, he probably makes a practice of hanging around foreign traders."

The three workmen, with Jupe's willing help, succeeded in stretching the steel cable across the dry river bed, in spite of whipping winds. Then the work began . . .

THE mate and the six guards had nothing to do but eat, drink, sleep, and play cards, while the cargo was being taken on. This they did until two of them grew restless and ventured through the sand storm to the old abandoned ship to pass the time of day with the captain.

How's he behavin', Capt'n?" one of the guards asked in a sly undertone. "Everything under control?"

"Stop your worrying, you dumb thugs," the Captain snarled. "Go back and sleep if you've nothing better to do."

"Right you are, sir," said the second guard. "We just thought we'd ask. You've been inside this wreck for the last six hours with no protection—"

"And that Jupiter guy does have menacin' muscles," said the first guard. "You gotta admit that."

"Stop being jealous," said the captain. "I tell you he's harmless. He knows enough English to obey orders, and not enough to talk back. Hell, he's even friendly. I call him Jupe." The Captain's snarl warmed up into a sarcastic haw-haw. "I even pound him on the back."

By way of illustration Captain Branaugh took a crack at the wall of the sand-drifted companionway. The whip—a short length of lithe steel cable looped around his hand—shattered the rotting panel, and brought down a shower of sand.

Then Jupe came trudging out of the freight room bearing another steel chest on his powerful shoulders, and the captain couldn't resist. With a cool wink at his two Right-You-Are-Sirs, he flung the steel lash at Jupe's back.

Jupe apparently did not feel the blow. The stroke left no mark, nor did it have any visible effect upon the big fellow's balance.

One of the guards, emboldened by this demonstration, said, "Hi, Jupe, old pal," and threw a foot out to trip him. For an instant the guard's black boot and Jupe's bare ankle were inter-

locked. Then Jupe was trudging on with his burden and the guard was picking himself up out of a heap.

Jupe, narrowing his eyes against the blowing silver sands, toted the steel case out to the sand embankment to place it in a neat row with the others already there.

FROM the improvised entrance in the old ship's hull the guards watched him. His enormous muscles fairly streamed with perspiration. Naked except for trunks, he looked like an over developed football man coming out of a shower—after a victory. That broad smile was his normal expression, and his large purple eyes and big white teeth gleamed with a mystery as deep as the mysteries of this little known planet.

"No work for us as long as that bird'll stick around." one of the guards mused. "Between him and the Capt'n's three heavy-labor boys, we won't have to turn a hand. Let's get back to the ship."

"If you ask me, that Jupe ain't typical Jupiterian, accordin' to the pictures in the papers. He's some sort of cross-breed. An' that's most likely got something to do with knowin' English."

"Hell, I thought he *was* English when we first come on him all alone down at the oasis. The Captain asks him what he's doin' there all alone, and the fellow says he's a outcast, so the captain says to come on an' we'll feed him. So he gets aboard, an' eats like a horse, an' drinks like an elephant, and then we make the final hop and set down beside this old wreck, an' the captain puts him to work."

"Damn funny the way the captain can't pull himself away from that old wreck, even for a meal."

"Yeah. After eighteen years waitin' for this trip, knowin' the stuff was up here free for first comers, I guess he's plenty anxious to get it loaded an' back to earth."

"What the hell did he say the stuff was—mictite?"

"Mictorite. He said he wouldn't trade it for diamonds, ounce for ounce. The U. S. A. metal markets are cryin' their eyes out for it. Um-mmm . . . Say—" the guard turned to make sure no one was within hearing. Silver sands were screaming through the dry river channel that separated the old abandoned *John Heen* from Captain Branaugh's new freighter. The guard muttered in a gravelled undertone. "There's six of us guards—all of us with the right kind of records. Me, I used to apply baseball bat diplomacy to strikers. You, you're a grad from Sing-Sing—"

"H-s-s-sh." His companion silenced the conversation until the big Jupiterian passed. Then, "Plenty of time for this talk after we start back."

Stephens and Peterson helped the two guards back across the channel to the *Hanover*. The storm was fairly blinding by this time, and the sand bombarded their space helmets like tiny pellets of flying steel.

WITHOUT the steel cable the game would have been called on account of bad weather. But with one man to hook each steel box onto the pulley, and two to tow it across, the work went on as speedily as the captain could drive it. Two men to every trip, the captain had warned—a warning well taken. The pull of gravity, more than double that of the earth, was enough to make the very act of walking a burden. The high wind and rugged terrain cut the men down to the mobility, as Stephens noted, of huge snails.

But Jupe's muscles were adapted to these conditions. In spite of his heavy

build he had an agility and a grace—yes, and something more subtle. Something that could be seen in the way he leaned into a surprise blast of high wind, or gauged the swing of a steel box when Keller would hook it onto the pulley cable. It was an uncanny sense of balance, a sense of the weights and strengths of the forces everywhere about him.

Perhaps it was instinctive. Perhaps it had developed out of the Jupiterians' age-old combat with strong gravity.*

Captain Branaugh grinned at himself as he watched this young giant's muscles play. All brawn and no brains, thought Branaugh. And an outcast—he could readily understand that. Jupe was definitely off-stripe. His legs, though stocky, weren't as short and thick as the typical Jupiterian's. His head was of less extreme broadness. And, most disconcerting, he had picked up the English quicker than the unfriendly natives Branaugh had encountered on the voyage eighteen years before.

"These boxes next." Branaugh pointed to the pile in the middle of the sand-drifted room.

"But those—" Jupe pointed to the boxes in the far corner.

"Not those, Jupe. We'll leave them here."

"You said take *all,*" said Jupe.

"Shut up with your damned arguing," said Branaugh, His tone brought a fierce light into Jupe's perpetual smile, and he felt constrained to temper his words. "The corner ones are heavier cases. I remember. I helped Heen pack them. We may not have room for all. We'll leave that corner to the last."

Jupe frowned with partial understanding. Earlier he had been querying the captain and the workmen about English units of weight. Now he picked up a handful of sand, poured it into Captain Branaugh's hands.

"How many ounces?" Jupe asked.

"About eight. Why? What the devil are you up to?"

The young Jupiterian walked into the forbidden corner and picked up one of the boxes, brought it over to Branaugh, beaming eagerly.

"This box is twelve, maybe thirteen, ounces not so heavy," said Jupe, "as last box. So you see, you mistooken. I try another."

"Come out of that corner!" Branaugh cracked his lash against a steel lid, but Jupe had already acted on his impulse. He lifted another box.

"This one only two ounces heavier... And this one—*Uuugh!"*

A HUMAN skeleton fell from among among the steel chests. Its dry rotting bones scattered. Jupe bent over them.

"Get back to work, you damned devil!" Branaugh roared. "What the hell you staring at? That's nothing but a pile of bones."

Jupe didn't move until the captain struck him the fourth time with the steel cable lash. The captain's other hand held a revolver. Even then Jupe bent down and picked up something up before moving away—an engraved gold ring. This Branaugh could not see, for Jupe's back was turned.

* This is really the truth. On Jupiter, where gravity is much greater than on Earth, it becomes a factor of tremendous importance in almost every action of its inhabitants. Buildings must be constructed to bear up under greater stress; application of power in any manner which combats gravitational influence must take that influence into greater consideration; the effect of swift movement on the body is greater, and greater dexterity and muscular reaction is necessary. Scientifically, there are hundreds of ways in which gravity plays a physical part in the daily life and work of a Jupiterian. It is only natural that a factor that has become so important results in a natural aptitude for analytic solutions to its problems, and the mathematics involved.—Ed.

"Get moving, I tell you!" The captain's words scraped like a steel saw against stone.

Jupe suddenly obeyed in the most literal fashion. He marched out of the dilapidated hull and struck out across the desert.

Go after him, you men. Don't get lost. Take a rope, tie yourselves together. Run him down. We need him."

All three of the workmen struck out, somewhat dubious over such an undertaking. Keller knew there was no chance of out-running a native Jupiterian on his own planet. "He's got a hundred yards on us and we're not gaining. If he'd only look back—*Jupe! Jupe!!!*"

It was useless to shout against the screeching winds.

"I'm for letting him go," Peterson declared. "What right has the captain got to make him work?"

"Or to drive him off into the desert?" Stephens added. "No man could live more than a few days in these bad lands. I'm for bringing him back."

"We're all three for giving the fellow a square deal," said Keller. "That's why the captain sent us."

"What do you mean?"

"Jupe has discovered we don't disrespect him the way the guards do. He might come back for *us* when he wouldn't for *them*."

"You're giving Jupe credit for a lot of intelligence," said Peterson. "We're all foreigners to him. Can he discriminate? I figure if he's sore enough at the captain he'll tear us all up."

"What do you suppose happened between him and the cap—" Stephens suddenly changed his tone. "Look! We're gaining on him."

Out of the silver haze of sand, Jupe's bright purple eyes and white teeth gleamed amiably as the three men dragged up to where he waited.

"I take you back," said Jupe, "before you three will lost yourself."

Back they went and again the work went on.

THE three workmen, after sixteen hours of toil, demanded rest before finishing.

But Jupe's life was not tuned to a twenty-four hour day. The captain put him to work on the Hanover side of the channel, carting the steel chests into the sleek freighter, packing them back in the hold.

Jupe was again smiling. A simple soul, thought Captain Branaugh. Afraid of skeletons, offended at sharp words, restored to peaceful subservience by a square meal. All right, the fellow could work on while the crew slept.

The captain gave him specific instructions about loading the hold compactly. It was a job that called for precision. Jupe apparently was in the mood for carrying out orders precisely. The captain watched him for a few minutes, heard him naming aloud the weights—pounds and ounces—of each box he lifted. So many nonsense syllables, thought the captain, and took himself off to bed.

Some hours later, Stephens, Peterson and Keller were awakened by the Jupiterian's low whisper.

"The captain wants you. Go to upstairs room," said Jupe with a little less than his usual big grin. "Wait there for captain, *you three*." He added the number with emphasis.

The men muttered among themselves as they ascended. The only room at the head of the stairs was the emergency control room, rarely used, even in flight.

"It's screwy," said Stephens, shaking out of his sleepiness. "But captains are supposed to know what they want. I doubt if he's dressed yet, but we've

got to be on the spot waiting."

They lounged on the emergency control room bench at the head of the stairs. They didn't have to wait long. Without warning from below, a book whizzed up the stairs and fell on the floor before them.

Keller picked it up. "What's the idea?"

No answer came from below.

Keller opened the book, Stephens and Peterson looked over his shoulder.

At that moment a door sounded and Captain Branaugh bounded up the stairs. He had a pistol in his hand. Two Right-You-Are-Sirs followed at his heels, guns ready.

"So it's conspiracy, is it?" The Captain blatted in a voice that shook the dials. He glared through sullen sleepy eyes. He wore only his sleeping garments, as did the guards.

Obviously the three of them had just been awakened by Jupe, and their fire-alarm manner suggested intentions of murder.

"There's no conspiracy," Keller snapped. "We were told to wait here for you."

"You'll have to talk faster than that," Branaugh growled, "Your pal Jupe spilled it. I ought to kill you outright. Gimme that account book, you damned sneaks."

One of the guards snatched it.

"You're wrong, Cap!" Stephens cut his words bitterly. "We just picked it up—"

"To pry into my wealth—I know." The captain was on a trigger edge. "The next word I hear about this plot to kill me—"

"Jupe lied, I tell you," Keller rasped.

"Shut up! Another breath and I'll—"

"You'll *what?*" Stephens defied.

FOR an instant everyone thought the captain would fire. Then his expression changed to a cold brutal smile.

"Aren't you the sweet innocent things," he said with saccharine sarcasm. "Get bundled up and move the rest of that cargo before I do something unpleasant . . . "

The three workmen had plenty of time to discuss this strange turn of events in the hours that followed.

Not one of them was surprised at the captain's part in the affair. His middle name had been brutality from the start. And Keller remembered he had played a similar role in the expedition of eighteen years before.

The one disturbing thing about Branaugh, however, was that he had withheld his brutality at an unexpected moment. All at once he had become strangely conservative in his treatment. For one of his nature, such a turn looked exceedingly treacherous.

As for Jupe —

"When I get back to my little blonde," said Stephens, "I'm going to hate to tell her what I'll have to tell her. She'll ask about the Jupiterians. I'll have to admit that the only one I saw pulled the lowest, most deliberate, most dastardly frame-up, I ever had pulled on me."

"*If* you get back," Keller amended. "I've a hunch this thing'll chalk us up as casualties."

"I've got a hunch," said Peterson, "that that damned captain and his corkscrew native are pulling a hoax all their own. Did the two of them have any dealings on your first visit up here?"

"Eighteen years ago?" Keller shook his head. "Hell, this Jupe wasn't morn'n a baby then. I have my doubts if he was even born yet."

"Anyway he's up to something plenty tricky," said Peterson. "He's no ignoramus. Notice how he goes for weights and figures."

Peterson recalled that soon after Jupe had learned the mathematics of ounces,

pounds, and tons, he had playfully lifted each of the three workmen, also the guards, and told them their exact weights.

"That's the Jupiter instinct in him," Keller declared. "Old Captain Heen had lots of respect for the Jupiterians. He mixed with them and made friends—until our crew started trouble."

"Meaning Branaugh?"

"You guessed it. Branaugh's arrogance cut them like a buzz saw." Keller conceded it was lucky that all contact with the natives would be avoided on this trip.

As to the earlier expedition, the unfriendliness engendered by a few young upstarts including Branaugh—then a lieutenant—had led to the tragic failure of the John Heen to take off.

"Old John Heen was the only person who could navigate his ship. And he had gone and lost himself in the desert, and even his native friends failed to find any trace of him.

"I remember one beautiful starry-eyed native woman that had been old John Heen's choice through our two years' stay. Seems to me they were married by Jupiterian rites. Anyway, after he disappeared she went on searching for days, always coming back to the ship to report. Most of us came to feel plenty sorry for her, seeing that Captain Heen must have meant a good deal to her the same as he did to us."

Finally, Keller said, a vast, unfriendly tribe swooped down and threatened to annihilate the party. The precious metal meant nothing to them, it was foreigners they were after.

A take-off was hazarded, but the ship failed to get off. As everyone knew, it had been overloaded.

"The best we could do," Keller said "was lock up, grab our two life boats and take our chances. That's how Captain Branaugh and I happen to be alive today. You know the rest. The men who were in my life boat had enough air and food to get by on. But only one man came through alive on the other life boat—Captain Branaugh."

AS Keller concluded his account he peered up at the skies. A deep silvery twilight held sway over the bad lands. Most of the light came from one of the big platinum moons.

The scene was a welcome contrast to the hot blowing sands that had preceded. To Stephens and Peterson, unaccustomed to Jupiter's moons, it was a weird setting in which anything might happen.

Even so, they were scarcely prepared for the sight that suddenly passed before their gaze. It was like something out of a phantom world.

They had been waiting, during their recent conversation, for Jupe to bring more boxes out of the old shadowy hull. Now he appeared, coming down the entrance incline with a human skeleton in his arms.

Jupe did not bother to notice whether anyone saw him. He paused, turned the armful of bones gently from side to side, to shake off the sand and dust. He turned away from the old ship and marched solemnly, reverently.

The three men made haste to follow, keeping some fifty yards between them and this apparition-like sight.

When Jupe stopped, they slipped behind jutting copper-red stones and watched.

Under the dim light of that Jupiter evening a long-delayed burial service took place. Stephens, Keller, and Peterson, stinging with the violent suspicion this mysterious Jupe had generated in them, looked on in silence, mystified.

Jupe scooped out a shallow grave, using a flat stone for a shovel. He

placed the bones tenderly, his restrained movements were a striking contrast to the heaving of heavy boxes that his muscles seemed made for.

Stephens whispered, "An earth man's skeleton, isn't it?"

Keller answered that he had never compared Earth and Jupiterian skeletons. Stripped of their muscles he doubted whether their differences would be so noticeable.

If Keller had any guess beyond that, he kept it to himself . . .

BY THE ship's clock it was the lunch hour. Everyone was in the dining room. As usual, Jupe was first to finish his meal. He always ate at his own private table—a trunk up-ended in one corner. Now Captain Branaugh strode over to him, ordered him to get back into the hold and get the boxes arranged.

Stephens exchanged glances with his two confidantes. They too were watching every interplay between Jupe and the captain.

Branaugh turned to the guards and announced, "We'll shove off in a few hours."

Jupe spoke up. "I ask to go back to your planet with you." So saying, he smiled and strode out to return to work.

His exit was followed by a scattering of guffaws.

"Nuts," said the captain.

"Who does he think he is?" the mate said. "There's no profit in loading a ship with dead weight. For every Jupe we could haul a couple million—"

"Shut up!" the captain exploded, adding harshly, "all of you."

The mate's break, Stephens later observed to Keller, had evidently caught the captain in the gizzard.

Now everyone was ordered to sort through his own belongings and throw out every ounce he could spare. The last-minute rush was near at hand.

Branaugh and his guards tried out the lifeboats and the weather at the same time. With this load—and no one except the captain knew just how near to a capacity load it was (excepting Jupe, perhaps, with his uncanny mathematical memory) — it would be essential to take off in windless air. The two lifeboat parties set out to hop over these regions far enough to gauge the coming air currents.

During their absence Stephens noticed that Jupe was nowhere to be seen. There was no time to wonder where he was or what he might be up to. The job before Messrs. Stephens, Peterson, and Keller was to bring over one last box—without any Jupiterian aid.

By the time they heaved the steel chest into the wide central corridor of the ship they were near exhaustion. They had come over the channel under a hot bright sun, and for a moment, before their eyes adjusted to the darkness of the ship, they literally did not know whether they were coming or going.

"Slide your cargo to the other end, you fools," the mate shouted from the control room as they were about to roll it in upon his premises.

At the opposite end of the corridor they left it for Jupe's final loading. The captain had assigned all of that to his ready muscles. He was both stevedore and skilled executor of this loading job.

LOADING a cargo, as every space man knew, was no trifle. The high velocity acceleration and retarding of a ship, combined with faulty loading of its contents, had accounted for many of the space tragedies of earlier days.

But the hold of the good ship *Hanover* was replete with modern safety devices. The "red star door," as it

was called, would provide a barrier of steel between the freight-filled room, aft, and the corridor that led fore to the control room.

As to the arrangement of the steel boxes, Captain Branaugh had pasted a chart on the red star door to designate the exact location of each, thus specifying the added precaution of breaking joints between alternate rows.

Now the three workmen stood gazing at that chart, noting that the Jupiterian stevedore had intelligently checked the spaces off, one by one, in simple obedience to the captain's orders. The cargo formed an almost solid wall within the open door. There was room for only one more box at the top.

At this moment the lost Jupe suddenly reappeared from a most unexpected source. An upper level box slid forward without warning, h a n d s reached out from behind it to swing it gently down into the doorway, the hands were followed by muscular arms, then a nearly naked muscular body slithered out of the closely packed wall of cargo.

"Hello to you," said Jupe with an immense smile. "I got lost to take a nap."

He dropped to the floor. He picked up the last of the boxes and filled the remaining space. He checked off the last space on the chart, and walked away.

"Am I seeing things or is he a Houdini?" Stephens muttered.

"Something's screwy," said Peterson, scratching his head.

"I think I know," said Keller in an undertone. "He's left a hole among those boxes so he can stow away."

"Uugh! And the mate said his weight's worth a couple million in mictorite," Stephens gasped. "By law we're supposed to tell—"

"We're in no position to tell Captain Branaugh anything," Keller snapped. "We're the captain's favorite scum of the earth—thanks to Jupe."

"Hell, we're everybody's goat," Stephens groaned, pacing the floor. "Damned if I wouldn't like to blow a lid off and see what's boiling."

"Sit tight," said Keller.

"And be glad your blonde cutie can't see you now," Peterson added.

THE thin whine of light rocket motors announced the return of the two lifeboats. In a moment the captain and his six guards were rushing hither and thither through the chambers of the *Hanover* making a final check-up for the take-off.

"Set your dials," Branaugh shouted to the mate. "In precisely twenty minutes we bang off. No time to lose. We'll get the jump on the weather."

Four of the guards grabbed the last of their luggage, checked out, took one of the lifeboats and rocketed off.

The other lifeboat was attached to the ship for the remainder of the party —two guards, captain, mate, three workmen, and possibly a stowaway. Stephens took in the situation and blew a fuse.

"Listen, Cap. Whats' the big idea? Is this ship so heavy you've got to shake a lifeboat and four guards to lift it?"

For an answer the captain slammed the young workman against the wall and strode on. Stephens leaped after him, grabbed him by the arm.

"So heavy we can't even get off in a wind? Why the hell don't you dump a box?"

Flaming anger shot through the captain's face, but he swallowed it in favor of a rasping laugh.

"Outa my way, fool," he barked. "It's fifteen minutes till take-off. Get your surplus junk overboard. We've

got to lighten up."

Stephens caught a nod from Keller and knew he'd better obey. Jupe's purple eyes smiled at him mysteriously from across the corridor. An undertone conversation passed between the two guards. What was it all about? Did anyone know whether the ship was loaded to rip to pieces in mid-space? Sure as hell somebody ought to know.

Had Stephens heard the bit of conversation that passed between the guards, it wouldn't have clarified his confusion in the slightest.

"Still keepin' it under your hat?" said one of the guards.

The other nodded. "Lucky we didn't pull the other four in on it. We can put it over easier ourselves, an' the swag'll stretch a hellova lot farther."

"You all set?"

His companion gave an affirmative wink. "Remember, let the captain clean house first, then we take over."

The mate now scurried through the rooms with a tray of coffee, handed a cup to Stephens, who drank it at a gulp. Peterson drank his; Keller dubiously, poured his cup down the waste chute.

Keller returned to Stephens disgusted. "Watch 'em or they'll throw out your gold teeth. Those copper rocks you picked up for souvenirs for your blonde—"

"What about 'em?" Stephens blustered.

"Someone's tossed them down the waste chute."

"I'll run down to the crags and get some more," Stephens snapped. "I promised her—"

"If I were you I wouldn't set a foot off this ship," said Keller in a low warning voice.

"Hell, if it's a matter of ounces, I'd toss out my boots—"

The captain thrust his head in at the door. "Okay, lad. If you want to trade your boots for rocks, go ahead. You've got ten minutes."

STEPHENS went into action on impulse. He raced out of the ship as fast as heavy gravity would permit. But by the time he reached the nearest copper-red outcropping of rocks a strange sleepiness seized him.

Peterson was watching from the porthole, and suddenly he began to mumble incoherent words. He wasn't aware that he yawned, or that his face was a mixture of drowsiness and fright. All he knew was that Stephens, fifty or sixty yards beyond the shadow of the ship, had taken off one boot, lain down, and apparently fallen asleep.

"I'm going to bring him back," Peterson snapped.

Keller caught Peterson by the shoulders, shook him. "Are you sure they didn't get *you* with those knockouts?"

"I'm okay," Peterson snorted. "Lemme go."

"Make it fast!"

Then Keller was watching Peterson race away; but the farther the fellow went the more his race became an unsteady tottering. He reached Stephens, started to pick him up, couldn't.

Keller's heart sank as he watched from the porthole. He saw Stephens shake his head groggily. Then both men lay relaxed on the ground as if nothing in the world mattered except sleep.

Keller sprang out of his room, leaped to the fore end of the corridor, through the arched opening into the control room.

"Hold that take-off, Branaugh!"

"Take it easy, fellow," came the captain's reply, suave as a nutmeg grater. Captain, mate, two guards, and a potential Jupiterian stowaway were all huddled near the window watching the two men who had gone outside.

"In the name of God, Branaugh," Keller shouted. "Those men will die if you leave them there. It's miles to a water hole—"

"Then they'll die. This freighter kicks off in five minutes, ten seconds. Everything's ready—*almost.*"

The "almost" was too obvious to need any explanation, but Captain Branaugh didn't mind being specific.

"You're overloading me, Keller!" he snapped, his face white with brutal determination. *"Get out!"*

Keller ducked under the captain's out thrust arm, flung himself at the instrument board, groped for something he could jerk or turn or smash—anything to throw a monkey-wrench in the takeoff. But the captain flew at him, slammed him back against the wall, struck a thudding blow at his head.

Keller came up with his eyes flashing, delivered a jarring uppercut, dodged a return blow, then tore loose with a dozen champion punches.

Now they were fighting down the corridor, guards, mate, and Jupe following in their wake.

"Three minutes, thirty seconds, captain!" the mate shouted. "Shall I switch it off or let it go?"

The captain, staggering backward, ignored the question. "Guns, you damned guards!"

THE pistols came up, Keller froze before them. He was stopped, all right, but he could still talk.

"Okay, you've got me, Branaugh. But I've got you, too. You murdered old John Heen. I'm damned sure of it. I've seen the skeleton—and now I've seen you."

The captain gave a brutal laugh, answered through his puffing breath. "Accident. I pushed a box over. He happened to be under it. What a wallop I got outa you boys searching the desert for him. You birds and that native woman would have spent a year at it if we hadn't been chased off in our lifeboats."

"*Your* boatload died," said Keller accusingly.

"Your load has all died since—I've seen to that. They're all dead but you. I'll let the desert take care of you, Keller. Save splashing my ship with blood."

The mate called, "Three minutes."

The captain swabbed his face and began barking orders furiously.

"Jupe, get that red star door rolled shut—*tight*—that's it. Now down with the bars. Okay. Now—"

Jupe's voice broke in. "I ride with you? Yes?"

"Wer'e loaded," Branaugh growled, "but we'll make room. Throw this man out and well let you ride. Make it quick. Be back in sixty seconds. We'll wait."

Jupe came at Keller grinning. His huge steel arms locked over the workman's chest, almost cutting off the hard breathing.

They whirled out through the locks together. Then instead of releasing Keller and chasing back to the ship, Jupe carried him on toward the two sleeping men several yards beyond. Mentally Keller was trying to count off those last minutes. They must be nearly gone—

Peterson was mumbling, ". . . leaving us here to die . . ."

"I know," Stephens answered groggily. "Damn, what'll that little blonde think? I promised her I'd—"

"You go back with her!"

The strange outburst came from Jupe. The two men roused up sleepily. Keller stood beside them, gazing at the hand that clamped, vise-like, on his wrist. Particularly he gazed at the en-

graved gold ring that adorned the little finger of that hand.

"Jupe!" Keller exploded. "What does this mean?"

The Jupiterian pointed to the engraving. "It say Heen. Just like me." He lifted his left elbow and revealed some small blue letters tattooed on the inner side of his arm. "Heen—my father's name. My name too. My mother you call Jupiter, she tell me before she die.

"You're John Heen's son?"

Jupe nodded, his husky face fairly bursting with smiles. "I find your Captain Branaugh is man who kills my father, steals his goods—"

"Yes, you darned louse, and you stand there and grin about it." Keller poured out his words with the bitterness of gall. "What a mess you've made. If you had had an ounce of your father's honor in you, you'd have avenged that murder. We'd have helped you. But, instead, you frame us for mutineers, and the captain plays the whole bunch of us for suckers. As a son, you're blasphemy on the name of John Heen—"

"But what I have *done*—"

"What you have done!" Keller smeared the words with his sickening disgust.

"To the *ship!*" Jupe protested, his smile stiffening into something intense and purposeful. "I have fix the door to break, the boxes to slide and kill, the power to go *pwoof*!"

"You've—*what*?"

Brrwowrrrrr — BLAMMMM!

LIKE an explosion clattering through steel boilers came the thunder of rockets. The space freighter leaped from its sandy bed—*leaped and fell.*

It happened almost with the swiftness of gunfire. In the instant of movement it had jumped through a quarter of a mile of space, tearing up a tremendous cloud of silver sand. Now it lay motionless. The sand sifted down like rain.

Jupe caught Stephens and Peterson by the hands and made strides toward the silent ship, Keller hurrying alongside.

The closer they came the prouder Jupe grew and the more amazed the other three men became. The rocket carriages, unbolted, had fallen off. A trail of unexploded rocket cartridges had spilled along the quarter-mile stretch.

When they finally got through the air locks to the central corridor they saw the unhinged red star door. Steel boxes had avalanched the whole corridor and smashed the lower control room.

Landsliding cargo is no respecter of persons, and mictorite proved to be no exception. There was no breathing left among what, a few minutes before, had been a murderous captain, his accomplicing mate, and two conspiring guards. There were only masses of bones and flesh and soaked clothing, mingled indistinguishably with crushed furniture and control instruments and pistols.

"Extra upstairs controls are left for us," Jupe announced, after making a crawling survey of the damages. "We have work to fix. I keep all parts I unfasten. You, Keller, can make ship go?"

"Right," said Keller. "If we can get things rearranged, I'll fly you back to the earth."

"You *would* let me ride too?" Jupe asked, beaming.

Keller and the others laughed. "I should say we will. In fact, we better make you captain, seeing that the cargo is yours—not to mention the headwork."

"The cargo I am glad to share," said Jupe.

"I hope," said Keller, earnestly, "you'll forget all those things I said. John Heen would be proud—"

"It is all right," Jupe laughed. "You earth men not always understand."

"I'm still a little dizzy," said Peterson. "Why did you pull that trick to get us in bad with the captain?"

Jupe paused, swinging a steel box effortlessly in his arms. "I weighed all the cargo. I learned the ship was too heavy. Someones would be left. So I do tricks to get good men out of way, before I make things go crash." Jupe turned his laughter on Keller. "Then you, Keller, throw fists. Almost nearly make us too late."

"Well, there'll be plenty of time now," said Keller. "Before that lifeboat of guards comes back to look for us we'll be on our way—eh, Steve?"

Stephens came out of his thoughts with a jerk. "Ugh? I was just thinking —when we take Jupe back to the earth, you suppose I oughta let him see my blonde? Kinda risky, considering she goes for the strong and handsome."

"It is all right," said Jupe with a merry twinkle. "You bring her me for souvenir."

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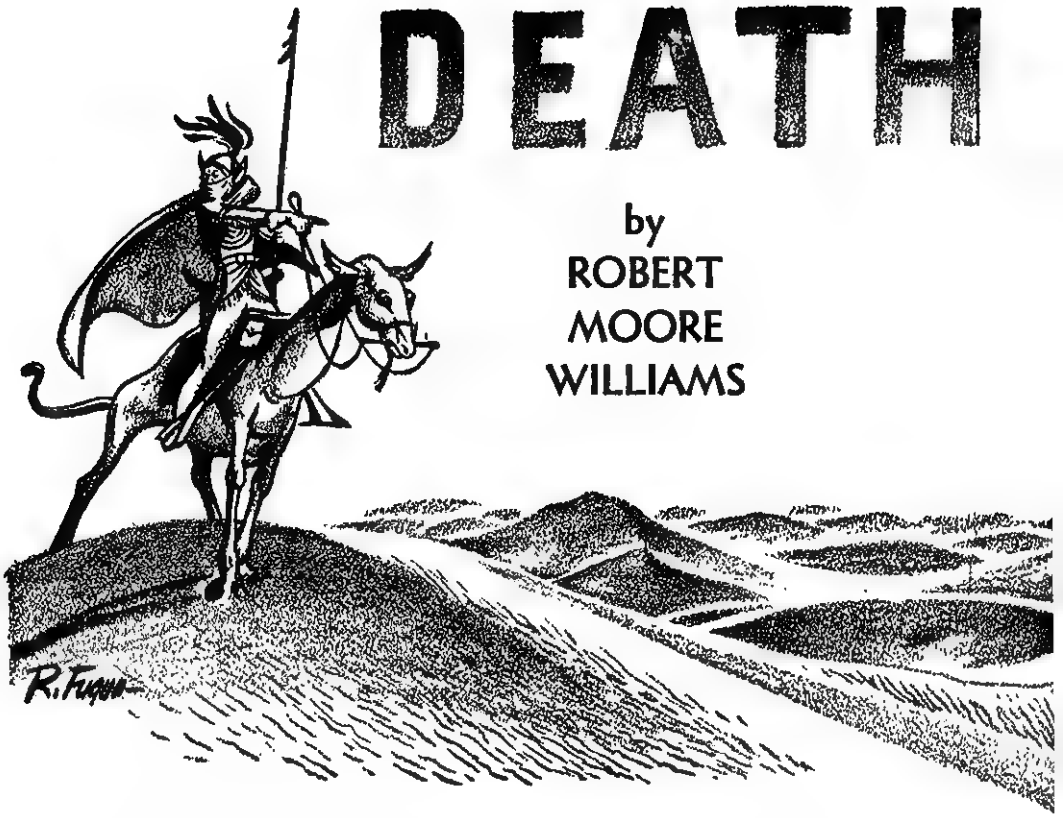


"YOU dirty devil! They'll hang you for this!" Ann Roberts blazed.

"Shut up!" Red Kelly hissed.

"I wasn't talking to you," she snapped, turning an angry face toward him. "I was talking to—to that!" She waved her hand to indicate Knuckles Roker.

"Maybe you weren't talking to me but I'm talking to you," Red Kelly whispered fiercely. "And I'm telling you to shut up. If you call Roker names and make him mad, he'll shoot us instead of marooning us as he intends to do."

"I'd rather be shot than marooned here!" she answered.

The angry nod of her head took in the red sands, the rocky, forlorn hills of the deserts of Mars. Red Kelly knew she was right about that. A slug from the heavy pistol in Roker's hand meant a quick and comparatively painless death. But to be marooned here meant two days of torture and then a slow death. Two days was as long as any human, without adequate supplies of water, could withstand the blazing Martian sun. And when the sun was gone the deserts plunged from a temperature

Over the rise behind them loomed the dreaded figure of a mounted martian

DESERT

The savage code of the Martians was as ruthless as the desert they lived on; and more valuable than millions in gems

in excess of one hundred and twenty degrees straight down to freezing. The thin atmosphere held little heat.

"He's leaving us here without water and food," the girl continued. "What chance do we have?"

"Plenty," Kelly grimly whispered. He was a tall young man, red-headed, and very angry now, but holding his anger in check. "Roker's making a mistake. He thinks he's dumping us right in the middle of the worst stretch of desert on this damned planet, where we'll die of thirst within fort-eight hours. Well, he is dumping us in that kind of a spot. *But what he don't know is that he's leaving us within walking distance of the only spring in this whole cursed country.* So keep your mouth shut and don't make him mad. We'll lick the dirty devil yet."

He saw the quick light of hope dawn in the girl's eyes as she understood his meaning. He ignored her, turning his attention to the man standing beside the desert buggy, that queer, tank-like contraption, which, with huge wheels and insulated, air-conditioned body, made exploration of the red deserts possible.

"How about leaving us just a little water, Knuckles?" Red Kelly asked, making his voice as persuasive as possible.

Knuckles Roker was a big man, fat around the middle, with heavy, droopy shoulders, and a face that would not take a prize in a beauty contest among gorillas. He was standing with his back to the door of the desert buggy regarding them with a scowling frown that indicated he was thinking. The gun in his hand, a forty-five caliber pistol, was very steady.

Red Kelly had all the respect in the world for that gun. He had seen Roker throw an empty whiskey bottle in the air and smash it with a single shot before it hit the ground. He had seen the man knock over a *droon* monkey, one of the few animals of Mars that could live in these deserts, with a single shot when the monkey was running at full speed. Which meant that Kelly was taking no chances on trying to jump Roker as long as he had the gun.

Since Roker seemed not to hear his question, Kelly repeated it.

"Naw," said Roker. "No water for youse, not a drop. And shut up!" he scowled fiercely at Kelly. "I'm tryin' to think what is best to do with youse, now that I got these—" He patted the bulging money belt looped around his fat stomach.

It was, or minutes earlier it had been, Red Kelly's money belt. But there wasn't any money in it. There hadn't been much money in it for years, but a few minutes earlier it had contained something that could have been exchanged for incredible amounts of money—Martian diamonds, those pale pure crystals of living light that are so highly prized by the natives of Mars, and no less highly prized by the wives of the millionaires of earth. There had been diamonds in the belt, diamonds that belonged jointly to Red Kelly and Ann Roberts. They were still in the belt, but Kelly didn't have it. Knuckles Roker had it.

KELLY had come into possession of the gems honestly. Befriending a dying Martian, he had been rewarded with a map showing the location of his tribe's hoard of gems, hidden in the ruins of one of the old abandoned cities on the Martian deserts. This had happened in Mars City, the only human settlement on the red planet. Kelly had been broke at the time. He had in his possession a map worth uncounted thousands of dollars, but to take advantage of the opportunity he had to have

a paltry five hundred dollars, for supplies, food, rental on a desert buggy, the expensive odds and ends that go into a desert expedition. Then a space ship bringing tourists from earth had landed. Ann Roberts had been on that ship.

Once—to Red Kelly it seemed thousands of years in the past—they had been in high school together. Then he had come to Mars, stowing away on a space ship, a kid looking for adventure and for fortune. He had found plenty of adventure but not the fortune. He had forgotten the girl. Then, a school teacher tired of teaching and taking an interplanetary vacation, she had turned up. Kelly could never remember clearly what had happened after that. Inexplicably he had found himself telling her about the map he owned, the chance it offered. She had offered to finance the trip as an equal partner. Kelly had said, "No!" a hundred times. Eventually, much against his better judgment, he had said yes.

The only desert buggy immediately available in Mars City had been owned by Knuckles Roker. They had rented it and had rented him to drive it. The map had been true and correct. They had found the gems—and Roker had seen them.

Now Roker had them, and gun in hand, he was leaning against the desert buggy deciding what to do with the two people who owned them.

"I oughta knock youse two off," he said meditatively. "That way I wouldn't be takin' any chance of youse ever turning up and making trouble. But if I knock youse off, this damned desert will turn youse into mummies and one of these danged desert tribes will find youse. Because youse is human, they will ship you into Mars City. There the sawbones will find youse died of lead poisoning and they'll tell the law and the law will go nosing around and asking how come. Especially, they'll ask me, because youse came out here in my buggy. Even if I've gone back to earth, they'll send some johnny dick around to ask questions—"

He shook his head. Thinking was hard for Knuckles Roker. Only when he could think aloud could he think at all. Never, in all his thinking, had moral considerations bothered him. The fact that he was deciding whether or not to murder two humans did not enter into the problem. The only difficulty was to decide whether it would be safer to kill them or to leave them alive and let the desert take care of them.

Scowling, he fingered his gun.

RED Kelly held his breath. Would Roker kill them outright or would he maroon them here?

"If I leave youse here," Roker said, speaking aloud again, "The desert'll get you, sure. Then, when I go back to Mars City, I can say a tribe of Martians jumped us when youse was away from the buggy and knocked youse off or took youse away, I don't know which. I barely managed to get out alive myself—"

His scowling face cleared. He grinned at them. "Heh! That's perfect, by gosh! Not a chance of that missing."

It was a good plan, Kelly knew, if it worked. There wasn't much white law on the planet. No one would be inclined to question Roker's story in Mars City. Too often had the desert tribes captured and enslaved lone prospectors for there to be any novelty in the situation. No one would even attempt to rescue them, knowing it would be impossible to find them in the thousands of square miles of desert on the planet. And the heat of sandy wastes would take their lives as effectively as a slug from a pistol. No,

there wasn't much chance of Roker's plan missing—if it worked as he thought it would work.

"Listen, Knuckles," Kelly said quickly. "You can't leave us here like this." He was putting on an act. He knew that Roker had already reached a decision, but it would not do for them to accept that decision too tamely. It might make the renegade suspicious.

"The heck I can't!" Roker answered. Gun covering them, he backed into the car, slamming shut the heavy door. The motor roared. Throwing sand, the giant wheels began to turn. Moving ponderously but steadily, the buggy rolled away. Heat waves rising from the sand began to blur outlines before it was two hundred yards away. It went out of sight around a rocky knoll. The labor of its exhaust died away into the distance.

Red Kelly wiped beads of sweat from his face. He looked at the girl. "I'm sorry, Ann," he said. "I knew Roker was no good but I didn't think he had enough guts to hold us up."

The girl tucked a wisp of brown hair up under the rim of her sun helmet. It's all right, Red," she answered. "I was looking for glamour and adventure when I came here. Well, I've found them. Now if you will only find this spring you were talking about——" She laughed gayly. "Think of it! I'm marooned in the desert with a red-headed prospector."

She wasn't much worried, Kelly saw. She didn't know this desert as he knew it, didn't know how treacherous, how tricky, and how deadly it really was. She didn't know, as he did, that even after they had found the spring, and assured themselves of a supply of water, that the odds were still against their ever escaping alive from this hell of sand.

With the spring, they had a chance. It wasn't a good chance, but it was still a hope. The water there would at least keep them alive. Roker had made a mistake in dumping them so near the spring. He had unwittingly given them a chance.

It was his job, Kelly grimly thought, to make good on that chance.

FURNACE heat beat upon them from all directions as they trudged across the desert, heat from the distant sun, pouring through the thin atmosphere, heat rising in waves from the sand.

"If there would only be a breeze—" Ann Roberts panted.

But there wasn't a breeze. There was not enough life in the thin air to support a breeze. This place was dead, and mummified, and deserved to be forgotten. Once a year rain fell here. Or was it once a century? Red Kelly did not know. His throat was beginning to parch and his skin was beginning to turn dry.

There was little life here, a few plants like cacti, a few insects, and occasionally in the rocky hills they saw *droon* monkeys, little furry, round-faced creatures as gray as the rocks they hid among. Kelly caught glimpses of the monkeys staring curiously at them. They could live here. Kelly knew that the little creatures had an extremely acute sense of smell, so keen that they could scent water dozens of feet underground.

He popped a salt tablet into his mouth and trudged on.* Roker apparently forgotten to take their salt tablets away from them.

"How—how much farther is it?" Ann Roberts questioned.

---

* The tablets were used on Mars just as they were used on earth, to replace vital salt lost to the body through perspiration.—Ed.

Roker had dropped them in mid-morning. The sun was slanting westward now, as the planet rolled slowly on its axis They had spent at least five hours in the merciless heat. Kelly looked at the girl. Her face was wan with coming heat fatigue. Her throat her hands, every unprotected spot on her body, was blistered with sunburn, the terrible sunburn of Mars.

"Another hour," he said. "We'll be there." He pointed toward a jagged ravine that they were approaching. "It's down this ditch. Just a little farther—"

She didn't say it but he knew how terribly she was suffering from thirst, knew it because he was suffering too. All moisture had long since left his throat. His voice was a dry croak, barely above a whisper. And—worst of all—already dreams of water were coming into his mind, lakes, with tree-lined shores, springs gushing from rocks, park fountains sending sprays into the air, taps marked "Ice Water" from which delicious streams forever flowed. It was the beginning of the heat madness, these water dreams.

He forced them out of his mind. They went reluctantly. They would come again, stronger, more persistent. And in the end, sometime late today or early tomorrow, they would come for the last time, as a mirage, a glistening stream running before his eyes, a lake, fountain. He would run toward the water and it would recede before him and he would keep running and it would continue receding—.

His voice a dry rattle, he cursed Roker.

At the edge of the ravine they found in the sand the tracks of *dothars,* the camels of Mars, great, splay-footed beasts that the tribesmen used to cross these deserts. *Dothar's* tracks in the sand could have only one meaning. A tribe, or a group of raiders, had passed this way.

They were going toward the spring.

"What are they?" Ann Roberts asked, staring at the tracks in the sand.

"Just a herd of wild camels," Red Kelly answered. Fear had leaped into his heart at the sight. He kept it to himself.

They reached the spring.

It was dry.

RED KELLY stared at the crack in the rock from which the stream of water had trickled, forming a murky, muddy pool below. There was dust in the pool now, dust. There was no water. There was little indication that water had ever been here.

The Martians who had been riding the *dothars* had stopped here. They, too, knew of this spring and had come here seeking water. They had dug a hole in the bottom of the basin, a hole that went down to bed rock.

The hole was dry to its bottom.

The Martians had pried into the crack between the rocks, seeking to open up the flow. They hadn't succeeded and had gone away.

There was no water here.

Kelly was aware that Ann Roberts was staring at the hole, her tongue moving over her parched lips, her gaze intent. She swayed. He caught her as she fell.

He carried her to the shade of the rocky ravine wall, fanned her gently. "Water," she moaned softly. "Water—"

"There isn't any water—" Kelly choked on the words. Heat beat in around them. His head felt light on his shoulders.

How long, ye gods of the deserts of Mars, how long would it be before—he choked off the thought.

A *droon* monkey chattered at them from the rocky lip of the ravine. It

was the only sound in the dry, hot stillness. Kelly was vaguely aware of the round, furry face peering curiously down at them as if the little creature was wondering about these strange two-legged animals that dared invade the deserts where only it could live.

"I'm sorry, Ann," he croaked. Her eyes were open, he saw. "Don't worry, Red," she whisered, "It's not your fault—"

But it was his fault. He shouldn't have let her come with him, he shouldn't have trusted Roker, he shouldn't have—

Why cry over spilled milk? He had let her come, he had trusted Roker. And this had happened. If the spring had been flowing, they would have had a chance. But it wasn't running. It was dry. Now there was no hope.

On the rocks above them the *droon* monkey chattered again. Kelly stared at it, a glaze forming in his eyes. It didn't mind the heat, and as for water— Slowly the glaze went out of Kelly's eyes. He remembered a trick an old prospector had once told him would work. He got to his feet.

"What is it?" Ann Roberts questioned.

"I've thought of something," he answered. He started to tell her what it was, then changed his mind. His idea might not work. No use raising hopes in Ann that would only have to be dashed to pieces. She couldn't stand much more. "Lie quietly," he said. "I'll be back in a moment."

He felt through his pockets, searching for a piece of cord, a length of wire, anything that would make a noose. His hope or life was tied up in a noose. He needed cord, wire. There was no cord in his pockets, no wire, no piece of string. He wondered dazedly if they were going to die for lack of a piece of string.

Then he remembered his boots. They were high-topped miner's boots, with rawhide laces, brought from earth. He removed the laces and he had his piece of string. Slowly he fashioned it into a noose. He buried the noose in the sand and laid down, holding the end of the rawhide in one hand.

THE monkey chattered at him. It peered over the rocks at him, called insults down on him, squeaked in its rusty hinge voice at the strange figure lying so quietly there in the bottom of the ravine. It was a small monkey, not much bigger than a cat. Red Kelly hoped from the bottom of his heart that it was a curious monkey too.

He didn't move. The monkey came down from the rocks and threw sand at him. His lack of movement excited its curiosity. He watched it from slitted eyes. It was coming closer. He held his breath. It stepped on the spot where the noose was hidden. He jerked with all his strength.

A second later he had his arms full of a wildly screeching creature. He held it, petted it. It soon discovered that he did not intend to harm it and ceased its struggle to escape.

"Nice monkey," Red Kelly whispered, his voice a dry husk. It was a nice monkey. It was more than that. It was his hope of life.

Very slowly he began to feed it salt tablets from the supply he carried in his pocket. It spat the first one out, grimacing its round face. Then tasting the salt, it hunted in the sand for the fragments of the tablet.

Ann Roberts came slowly down the ravine to them.

"What on earth are you doing?" she questioned.

"Feeding salt to this monkey," Kelly answered.

"Oh, Red—" she whispered. She thought the heat had already got him,

that he was out of his head. There was sickness on her face as she watched him feed another tablet to the little creature. "Why can't we just die in peace and have it over with? Why do we have to suffer like this before we die?"

"We're not dead yet." Kelly answered.

She tried to smile at his effort to show courage. The effort left her face contorted.

"Had enough salt, old timer?" Red Kelly said to the monkey.

It licked its chops, refused the next salt tablet. It had had enough.

"Okay," Kelly said. "Here's where you start earning your keep."

He tied the end of his bootlace around the monkey's neck, making a leash, and set it on the sand.

A human being, coming unexpectedly upon the scene taking place in the bottom of that rocky ravine in the heart of the deserts of Mars, would have instantly concluded that he had come upon two lunatics escaped from a nut house. Of the three living creatures moving through the fierce heat of the dying day, only the activities of the monkey would have seemed intelligent, and not too intelligent at that. Tied at the end of a string, it was making its way along the bottom of the ravine, stopping and sniffing at every rock it passed, at the base of every bluff, for all the world like a dog visiting fireplugs and telephone poles in a city on earth.

Behind the monkey, holding tight to the end of the string, was a tall young man, much blistered about the face and hands, and obviously on the verge of heat prostration. Behind the man came a girl. She stumbled as she walked.

The two humans were following that monkey with a devoted interest and attention that could not have been greater if the little creature held their lives in the hollow of its furry paws.

JUST as the fierce sun was setting in the west, just as the chill of the approaching night was coming on, the monkey stopped at the base of a bluff and began to dig in the sand collected there. Instantly the tall young man was down on his knees and digging too. Then the girl tried to help. She was too exhausted to be of any assistance.

A half hour later, in the gathering night, a cracked voice could have been heard yelling, "Ann! Ann! We've got it! There's water here."

Under his eagerly scooping fingers, Red Kelly could feel the sand turning moist. He dug like a madman, like a fool. He could feel water splashing on his fingers now. *Water!*

A few minutes later he was gently dribbling drops of golden moisture into the mouth of Ann Roberts. At the same time he was shouting at the top of his voice.

"Water! Water! By god, Ann, that monkey did the job for us. The salt made him thirsty as hell and he started looking for water. With that keen nose of his, he found what he was looking for. That's the only way those monkeys can stay alive here in these deserts. They can smell water underground and dig down to it. Water, Ann! Drink up. Drink all you want!"

The girl drank slowly, not daring to drink too much too quickly. Red Kelly drank. The monkey drank. Red Kelly felt the terrible, cottony dryness leave his mouth. Cool drops poured down his throat. He had been terribly dehydrated by the hours they had spent in the desert, but now that they had found water, he could feel his strength returning.

They had won over the desert. There remained only to win over Roker. But

now that they had water, Roker would not be too difficult. Kelly knew that he could make water containers out of the stalks of the cacti and against the lesser gravity of Mars, a man could carry enough water to cover the remaining distance to Mars City. Days would be needed to cover that distance, but traveling by night, they could take all the time they wanted, now that they had water.

His shout of triumph echoed over the desert, echoed and abruptly died as something crunched on the bluff above him. He looked up.

Outlined against the starlight a *dothar* stood on the bluff, a *dothar* with a rider. They were so near that Kelly could see the long lance in the hands of the rider.

WHILE he watched not daring to breath, he saw another Martian camel appear above them, and then another, and another, until there were a dozen of them, all with riders.

The raiding party whose tracks they had seen in the ravine above! The raiders had been near. They heard his shouts, and had come to investigate.

Silently fierce tribesmen stared down into the ravine. Then, at a hissed command from their leader, they began to urge their *dothars* down the rocky slope. As silent as ghosts, the great sure-footed beasts picked their way among the rocks.

Watching them with sick fascination, Kelly was aware that the girl had moved close to him. She didn't say a word but he could hear her panting for breath. She also knew the fate of humans captured by these terrible tribes of the deserts of Mars. Death was the best that could be hoped for, and that speedily. They couldn't run. The *dothars,* for all their apparent clumsiness, could move very swiftly. Besides, these raiders probably hoped their victims would try to flee. Then they would have a chance to use those long lances in a game they loved to play, spearing their victims on the run.

"Our only chance is that they're friendly," Kelly whispered. And little enough chance of that, he thought. A few minutes later, he knew there wasn't any chance. A ring of lances surrounded them. The leader of the Martians motioned to one of his men, who urged his *dothar* forward. "Are these the ones?" the leader questioned.

The person thus addressed leaned forward on his *dothar,* scanned their faces. One of the moons of Mars was in the sky and the vault of heaven was brilliant with the light of stars, providing an illumination far better than the best moonlight on earth.

"I recognize them clearly," the Martian said. "Yes, these are the ones."

He spoke the universal tongue of the red planet, which Kelly understood.

"Good," the Martian leader said. Then he spoke to Kelly. "Where are the diamonds?"

Kelly gulped. These raiders were seeking the diamonds. How had they known?

"One of my men saw you find the hidden cache of my tribe," the leader explained. "We have been seeking you since that time. Somehow we lost you last night. Now we have found you again. Where are the diamonds? You have stolen the property of this tribe, and I, as leader, demand that it be returned."

"But I didn't steal them." Kelly burst out. "I helped one of your own people and in return, he gave me a map showing where the jewels were hidden. He said they belonged to his tribe, but what belonged to the tribe belonged also to him, and that for helping him, the jewels were mine. There was no

though of theft—" With the passing of the sun, the chill of outer space had crept in on the deserts. It was cold here in this rocky ravine, but in spite of that Kelly was suddenly sweating.

His words produced a stir among the Martians, though whether this was good or bad Kelly could not determine. The leader remained imperturbable. "You were given a map, you say?" he questioned.

"Yes," Kelly answered. "If those jewels belonged to you, then the Martian who gave me the map must have been one of your own tribe."

HE pounded his point home, for two reasons. These tribes were extremely loyal to their own clan. Kelly also knew that all property was held in common in a sort of primitive socialism, which meant that the Martian who had given him the map had a perfect right to dispose of the jewels to reward a benefactor. They belonged to the tribe all right, but he was part of the tribe, and he could give them away if he chose, answering only to the tribe for the way he disposed of the common property. Kelly dared to hope again. Because of their clan loyalty, these tribesmen would uphold the act of their dead comrade.

"Where is this map of which you speak?" their leader questioned.

"I—" Kelly began and stopped as suddenly as he had started. The map would prove his claim. It was signed by the name of the dead Martian. These people would recognize that name. But —the map was in the desert buggy. Roker had it. Kelly explained what had happened.

Again a stir ran through the rank of the tribesmen. But this time there was no mistaking its meaning. It was not friendly. Lance points dipped down until they were inches from Kelly. His arm went protectingly around Ann Roberts.

"It's the truth," he insisted doggedly. "We were marooned this morning, without food or water—"

"And you are still alive, without water?" the leader questioned doubtfully.

"But we found water," Kelly answered. He pointed to the hole scooped out in the sand.

This produced a real stir. The Martians had not seen the hole, or seeing it had thought the two humans had been merely digging for water. Several of the raiders wheeled their mounts, sped to inspect the hole. Kelly could hear their excited voices. "Water! It is really water. The earthman has found it—" Even the leader whirled his *dothar* and went to inspect the spring Kelly had discovered. A few minutes later he returned.

"We will give you the benefit of the doubt," he said enigmatically. "If one of our tribesmen really gave you such a map, it is our duty to honor his decision. But, of course, we must be sure. We must have the map—"

"I told you what happened to the map," Kelly truculently replied. "I don't have it."

"Yes, I believe you said that once before. However—"

"But how can I give you a map I don't have?" Kelly demanded.

"You can't," the leader suavely answered. "That is why, if it exists and if your story is true, we are going to help you recover it. If you will show us the direction taken by Roker in his vehicle—"

Red Kelly scarcely believed his ears. If there was one word that was not in the vocabulary of these Martian tribes, it was mercy. They were as tough as the desert in which they lived, and as pitiless. But they had believed his

story and they were going to help him. It sounded like a miracle to him. Or were they planning some devious treachery known only to their cunning people?

"You mean you'll help us find Roker?" Kelly stuttered.

"I mean exactly that," the leader drily answered. "If you and your comrade will mount two of our spare riding beasts—"

ALREADY the Martians were leading spare *dothar* forward. They indicated that Kelly and Ann Roberts were to mount. As he started to swing up, he heard a sleepy chatter coming from the sand at his feet. Looking down, he saw the *droon* monkey. He picked it up.

"If we get out of this alive, old timer," he said fervently, "you're my mascot from now on."

He slipped the monkey into his pocket. It chattered gratefully, then went to sleep.

The Martians paused only long enough to water their beasts and fill their skin water bags. Then they were off, on the trail of Roker.

They found Roker at dawn, after picking up the tracks of the desert buggy in the middle of the night. He had stopped the vehicle to rest and he was sound asleep in the air-conditioned cab.

"Is that the man you seek?" the Martian leader questioned.

"Yes," Kelly answered. Here was a stroke of luck. Finding Roker asleep was the only fortunate thing that had happened to him during this entire trip. But after all, Roker had to sleep sometime.

"He is your enemy," the Martian leader said. "Do you wish to kill him while he sleeps?"

Such a suggestion was perfectly natural from a desert tribesman. They had a code of honor all right, but it was a tricky code, and it included taking every possible advantage of your enemy.

"You could use my lance," the Martian suggested, extending his weapon. "And run him through before he awakens."

After all—the thought passed through Kelly's mind—why shouldn't he do what this Martian suggested? Roker had marooned them, left them to die in the desert. Why should he expect any mercy?

The thought passed as soon as it came. Red Kelly came from earth. Roker was a crook and a renegade but Kelly could not kill him while he slept.

"No," he said. "But I'll take him just the same."

"As you prefer," the Martian said.

Kelly, as he slid from his mount and approached the desert buggy, was aware that the Martians were slowly and silently surrounding the vehicle. He paid little attention to them. Roker was the man he wanted. Quietly he worked the latch that opened the door. Then he was inside the roomy cab.

In the same instant Roker awakened. He took one look at the man standing in front of him and his hand flashed toward his pistol.

"This time you won't have a gun," Kelly said. He struck out and down, his fist landing with crushing force on Roker's arm. The pistol, half-drawn, clattered to the floor. Kelly reached for it.

As he bent over, Roker kicked him in the head with a hob-nailed boot.

"You dirty devil!" Kelly raged. Stars were exploding in front of his eyes. He fumbled for the pistol. His groping fingers didn't find it. Roker, in one explosive outburst, hurled himself at Kelly.

KELLY went down. He was only half conscious from the effects of the kick in the head and Roker had the strength and weight of a grizzly bear. The only thing Kelly could do was hold on and try to defend himself against the fingers searching for his throat. He held on. Talons clawed at his throat, fingers searching for his eyes.

In a fair fight— But this wasn't a fair fight; this was a grim battle for survival. They were both sprawled on the floor, Roker on top. Kelly locked his arms over Roker's back and rolled.

He rolled straight out the door of the buggy and fell with a thump on the sand. This time Roker was on the bottom. The fall knocked the wind out of him. Kelly scrambled to his feet.

"Get up," he grated. "And take what you've got coming."

Roker pulled himself erect.

Even the Martians, who were not experts on fist fights, said that it was a wonderful battle. They knew about lance fighting and knife fighting but the art of using the fists had never been discovered among them. They soon caught the idea, however, and looked on first amazed and then appalled that so much damage could be done with the weapons nature had furnished the human race. They saw Roker rock Kelly back on his heels with a blow to the point of the chin, then they saw Kelly bury his fist in the fat stomach of his antagonist, heard Roker grunt with pain. They saw Roker try to come to grips with the lighter man, saw Kelly dance away, saw his lean fists lance out, inflicting terrible damage on Roker's face. The Martians always enjoyed a fight. They enjoyed this one.

Red Kelly forgot all about the Martians. There was only one thing on his mind—that this man had marooned him and Ann Roberts on the desert. For that, this man would have to pay. Kelly's fists drove into Roker's middle, and drove again, and again, cutting down the greater strength of the man. Then the fists began to open up the face, cutting gashes at the corners of the mouth, flattening the nose. They closed the right eye and began their deadly work on the left one.

It was a battle in the desert dawn of Mars, with the sun peeping over the distant hills of sand, and for witnesses, a tense circle of Martians and an equally tense human girl. There was one other witness, a *droon* monkey, who was held in the girl's arms and who chattered constantly, from the beginning of the fight to the end.

The end came. Roker was reeling. His flailing arms were going wide, his breath was coming in great gulping wheezes. Then Red Kelly stepped in, his left going straight to the button. All his weight was behind it. Roker seemed to come unhinged when the blow hit. He folded in the middle and at the knees, fell like a log and lay without moving.

Panting, Kelly bent over him, ripped the money belt from the bulging stomach.

"Here," he said, extending the money belt to the Martian leader, "are your diamonds."

The leader accepted them. "And the map?" he said.

Kelly entered the desert buggy, found the map in the compartment where he had placed it. He took it out.

"Here's the map," he said. "It will prove my right to the jewels."

He knew, the instant he handed the folded square of paper to the Martian, that the final moment had come. The Martians either accepted the map and granted their right to the gems, or they denied the authenticity of the map and declared that Kelly and the girl were no better than thieves, to be punished

as the thieves were punished according to the code of the desert.

KELLY held his breath as the Martian leader examined the map. Would he decide this map was genuine? Or would he decide that possibly the square of paper had been forged?

The Martian could make any decision that pleased him. They were within his power. And these tribesmen were tricky, treacherous.

The leader sighed. "The map is genuine," he said. "I recognize the signature of our comrade, whom you befriended. Since he gave the jewels to you, we have no choice but to comply with his command."

Smiling, he extended the money belt to Kelly. "Here, my friend. These belong to you."

Dazedly Kelly took them. "You really mean it?" he whispered.

"Of course we mean it," he smiled. Then the smile faded. "Now we have complied with the request of our dead comrade. We have given the jewels to you. There was, however, no guarantee made that we would not take them back."

The words were harsh. Out of the corners of his eyes Kelly saw that two of the Martians were drawing close to Ann Roberts. The others were urging their great mounts forward and—their lances were down, the points ready to run him through.

They had kept to their code. They had given him the jewels. But that completed the letter of the contract. Now they were free to take them back again.

"You treacherous dog!" Red Kelly said. He and Ann were trapped and he knew it. Against those lance points he did not have a chance. Even if he attempted to leap into the desert buggy, thrown lances would make a sieve of his body before he reached the vehicle.

"You sneaking, crooked cur" he grated. There was no hope left. All he could do was tell the Martians what he thought of them. He told them just that. In the dawn light the face of the leader turned red as he listened to the words.

"That is our code," he said. "We have kept it to the letter."

"To hell with your code," Kelly raged. "Throw your lances and to hell with you."

He was terrible in his anger. From his saddle on the back of the giant *dothar* the leader stared down at him. Oddly the frown disappeared from his face. He began to smile.

"Brave words, my son," he said. "You try to trick us into an easy death and to seek death is the mark of a brave person, whether he be Martian or human. Nay, cease swearing at us. The jewels are yours, to do with as you see fit. Our code requires this. And you and your comrade are also free to go your way. That, also, is required by our code. I was merely testing your courage when I threatened you."

KELLY stopped in mid-sentence. From doubting eyes, he stared at the Martian. Was this another trick? Was the leader merely torturing him by raising false hopes. "Your code—" he faltered.

"A life for a life," the Martian answered. "You gave us our lives and in return we have no choice but to give your lives to you."

"I gave you your lives—" Red Kelly husked.

"Yes," the Martian leader answered. "We had expected to find water in the canyon where we found you. But the spring was no longer running. Our water bags were empty. Some of us, perhaps, would have won through to

other water, at the cost of terrible suffering, but many of us would have died. When you found that spring, you found life for you and life for us as well. Will we harm the man who saves us? Not in a thousand years!"

The voice rang in the silent desert air. Simultaneously the menacing lances were lifted, in salute. Red Kelly realized what had happened. The Martians had come to that same spring, seeking water. To them, also, water was life. And there was no water. They had faced the same fate he and Ann Roberts had faced. The desert played no favorites. When he had found water, he had saved his life and the lives of the Martians as well. He remembered how excited they had been when he said he had found water. No wonder they had been excited, had run so eagerly to drink. They, too, had known the thirst of the desert.

"Thanks," Red Kelly muttered. "Thanks—"

"You do not need to thank me," the Martian replied. "Instead thank that one." With the tip of his lance, he pointed to the chattering *droon* monkey, still cradled in the arms of Ann Roberts.

"Okay," said Kelly. "I'll do just that."

HALF an hour later he and Ann Roberts watched the tribesmen silently fade away into the distance. They were going back to their people, back to the deserts of Mars.

Kelly started the motors of the desert buggy. He and Ann Roberts were going back to Mars City. They were taking two passengers with them, Knuckles Roker, securely bound, and one *droon* monkey, very much unbound.

"We'll take you with us on our honeymoon," Red Kelly said, addressing the monkey. Out of the corner of his eyes, he was watching Ann Roberts. She looked startled at his words, then she smiled.

"Of course," she said.

"She agrees," said Kelly, still addressing the furry little creature. Very gravely, but very happily, he winked at the monkey.

With equal gravity, but with an expression of impish delight lurking on its round face, it winked back at him.

"That makes it unanimous," Kelly said.

MUMMIFIED HEADS

ONE of the oldest and most gruesome customs to which man has devoted himself is the mummification and shrinking of the heads of his enemies. One thinks of such practices with revulsion and horror, but nevertheless they are still quite common in many regions of South America.

It is ironic to realize that civilization, which has so determinedly fought against such debasing practices, has been, in a sense the agency which has actually promoted fresh outbreaks of these gruesome crimes. For, sadly enough, many tourists consider a shrunken native head a delightful and unique souvenir of their journeys to South America. And while they are willing to pay the price for these horrible reminders of man's savagery, there will always be traders and natives who will supply their demand.

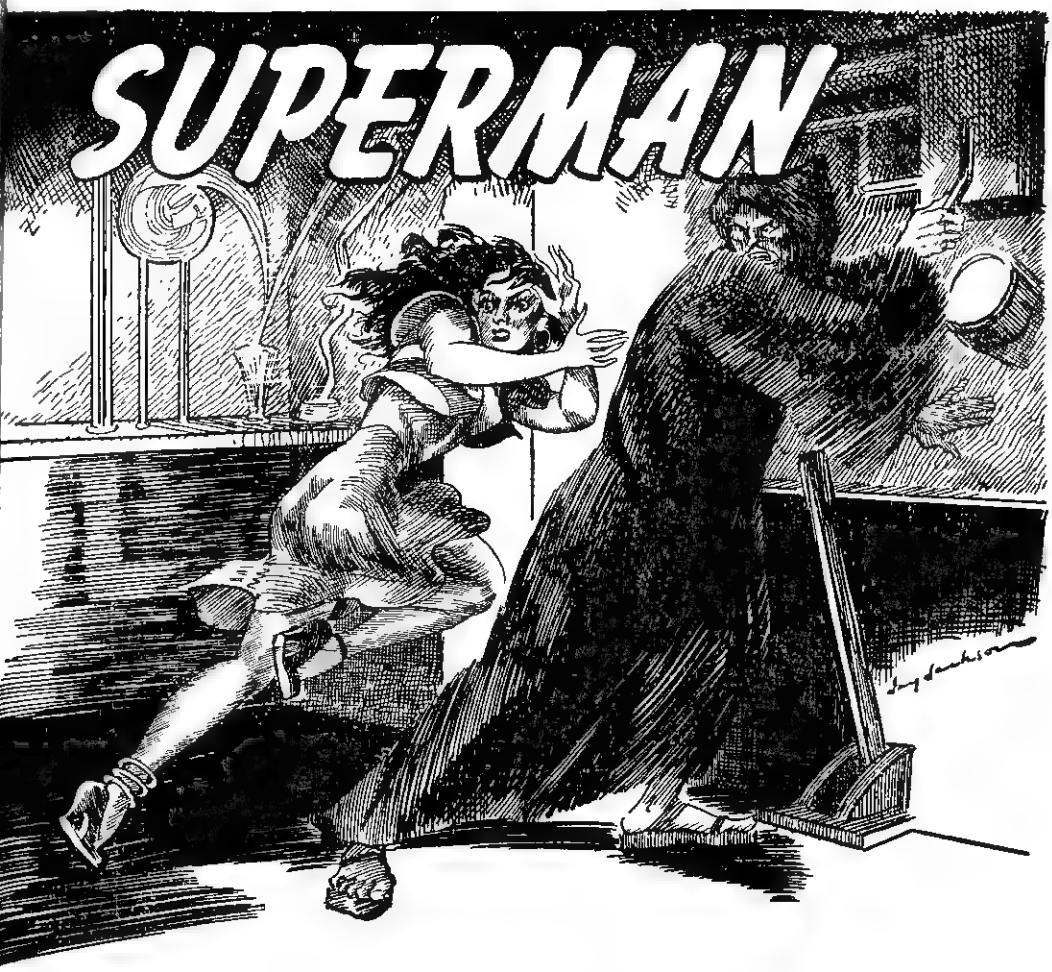
The actual process of shrinking a head is a jealously guarded tribal secret. A German scientist vanished into the unexplored Pongo de Seriche—the land of the Jivaros—in search of this process, and the only clue ever found as to his whereabouts was a shrunken head with light hair and a red beard which turned up for sale six months later in Panama.

The method differs in various tribes but the usual procedure begins with the killing of an enemy and the severing of his head. The scalp is slit, the skull removed and disposed of, and the shrinking process begins. The skin is stretched about a wooden handle and then thrust into boiling water to cause contraction. Then the head is filled with hot sand and kept constantly in motion in order that it may act on all parts of the head uniformly. As the sand cools, it is removed, the burnt tissue is scraped off, and the process is repeated.

As the head grows smaller the Indian works the features with his hands so that they will retain a life-like expression. When the head is reduced several times normal size and a natural expression maintained, the job is completed.

Tourists buy the finished product for around a hundred dollars!

Brandon swung the heavy panel in an arc of destruction



by Robert Leslie Bellem

Metal squeezed like putty in Brad Brandon's fingers. How had he acquired such might?

AN UGLY premonition slithered into Brad Brandon's heart as he came within view of the open door and saw what lay beyond. "Good God !" he choked; and he broke into a loping run; catapulted himself along the carpeted corridor.

Then, at the threshold of Celene Verlaine's efficienette apartment, he drew up short; stared with dazed disbelief at the chaos which lay before him.

Ordinarily homelike and feminine, the interior of the flat was now a shambles of overturned furniture, disordered drapes and shattered bric-a-brac. Lucite glow-rods countersunk in the ceiling cast down heatless artificial sunlight upon a havoc apparently wrought by some stupendous struggle; and over in a far corner of the living room stood the mute wreckage of a phonovis instrument, its power line sundered, its stroboscopic viewplate cracked and rendered useless, its audiomitter ripped out

by the roots.

These various ominous details Brad Brandon noted in a single, all-encompassing glance. Then he saw a shoe; a tiny red shoe, high heeled, perky, dainty like the lovely brunette girl who was its owner—Celene Verlaine. And somehow its presence in all this litter sent a fresh spate of premonition through Brad Brandon's veins.

"Celene! Celene, darling! Answer me!" he called, knowing even as he gave utterance to the outcry that she would not respond; that the girl he loved was nowhere within hearing distance of his voice.

A hurried, frantic search of the apartment confirmed his worst fears. Celene was gone; and she had not departed willingly. She must have put up a valiant battle, even to the loss of her footgear; but it had been in vain. In the end she had been dragged from the flat.

But why?

And at whose hands?

In a fury of agonized and frustrated suspense, Brandon darted out into the dim corridor; sped to another apartment farther down the passageway. Here he knocked with thunderous insistence, unmindful of the disturbance he was creating in the midnight's silence. Cold sweat formed in his clenched fists as he waited.

Presently there was a response to his impatient summons. The door opened and a slender blonde girl stared out at him, drowsy-eyed, her yellow hair streaming about her shoulders in a golden Niagara, a sheer negligee emphasizing the allure of her lilting young contours.

"Why, Brad Brandon!" she exclaimed sharply. "What in the world are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be on night shift at the rocket plane plant?"

The question stabbed briefly at his conscience. It was all too true that he should have been at his workbench this very moment, doing his bit toward defense production. In desperate haste, America was rearming against the war-threat of a combined Japanasian alliance which might launch an invasion of the West Coast at any hour. Historically repetitous, the United States had again been caught unprepared, just as it had been caught back in 1917 and again in 1940, a hundred years ago.

BUT Brandon had no thought, now, for his coglike job in the assembling of those newly designed rocket-propulsion planes which would spell safety for the western hemisphere and certain defeat for the Japanasian dictator who fancied himself as the reembodiment of a previous century's Hitler. Brandon's vision was temporarily blinded to his country's urgent needs, just as his eyes were also blind to the sweetly dulcet appearance of the blonde girl now standing before him.

He had known this golden haired Nalya Gerrard ever since they had been kids together in school; known her as a staunch friend, a pal he could always turn to when trouble came. But he had come to accept her as a matter of course, not noticing her youthful beauty; unaware that she might be desirable. Nor did he notice these things now, for his mind was preoccupied with other matters.

"Nalya!" he whispered harshly. "Did you hear a commotion a while back?"

"A commotion, Brad? No, I didn't hear anything. What was it—and where?"

He said: "In Celene Verlaine's apartment a few doors up the hall. Something has happened to Celene. She—she's gone."

"Gone?"

"Kidnaped!"

The blonde Nalya Gerrard drew a swift breath.

"But I don't understand, Brad. What makes you so sure?"

"Thirty minutes ago she dialed me on the phonovis, just as I was getting ready to go to work. She begged me to get over here as fast as I could. She mentioned trouble, danger . . . then, all of a sudden, the connection went dead. Her image faded from my viewplate and her voice seemed to die off in a scream."

"Brad, no! You don't think—"

"I know, I flagged a taxigyro, came here. I found her apartment torn up, her phonovis smashed useless. Somebody must have entered and overcome her while she was talking to me. And now I can't find her!"

Nalya's voice grew gentle with sympathy to match the soft warmth of her azure eyes.

"You love Celene, don't you, Brad?" More than you c-could ever love anyone else?"

He nodded, unable to find articulate words.

Nalya said: "The police must be notified. I'll dial them for you; make the report."

"Damn the police!" he burst out bitterly. "Ive got to find Celene myself! And if she's been hurt, I'll—"

Nalya touched his arm.

"There's nothing you can do personally, Brad. Except to go to your job and hope for the best. If this is really a kidnaping, you'd probably get in the way when the detectives begin their investigation. You'd interfere—and Celene might suffer because of it. No, Brad; you must go to the plane plant and hope for the best. If I learn anything, I'll contact you there."

He saw the wry wisdom of her advice. Compared to police efficiency, his own solitary efforts would be bungling and futile. He said:

"Yes, Nalya. You're right." Then, not heeding the almost imperceptible gesture with which she started to raise her arms toward him, he pivoted and made for the staircase.

En route, he paused at Celene Verlaine's open door long enough to take a last haggard look. Then he went downstairs and out of the building; started along the dark street—

And he stiffened into immobility as he felt the muzzle of a blast-gun poking at his spine!

A voice said harshly: "Make no move to escape, my friend, if you wish to live."

Brad Brandon started to answer; but the words never reached birth. Something bludgeoned him over the back of the skull with calculated force; smashed him to his knees. He tried to twist around as he fell; tried to grapple with his unseen assailant. It was no use. Again he was maced over the head, savagely, deliberately.

He went inert, unconscious.

HE WAS tightly strapped to a curious sort of chair when he awakened. The chair was of insulaplastic, a synthetic material recently perfected as a complete non-conductor of electricity; and it was entirely surrounded by a quadrangular, boxlike shield of what seemed to be thick lead.

For an instant, Brandon had a curious sensation of being still unconscious, or asleep; a dreamlike feeling of mellow warmth and queer superiority to mankind, such as you sometimes experience in the pleasanter sort of nightmare. Yet he knew he was awake, for his eyes were open and he had a full awareness of his surroundings.

It was strange, he thought, that his head didn't hurt after those two terrific

blows he had taken. It was equally strange that he had no weakness now as a result of those vicious clubstrokes. As a matter of fact, he felt fine. He felt stronger than he had ever known himself to be.

Someone undoubtedly had brought him here after slugging him senseless. He was in a house; a laboratory, evidently. He wondered about that, in a remote and incurious sort of way. But he was more interested in his present sensation of supreme well-being. It was almost as he imagined he might feel after taking a shot of dope.

Maybe that was it, he decided. Maybe someone *had* dosed him with a narcotic after strapping him to this insulaplastic chair. The idea angered him when he considered it. By what right should anyone use him for an experimental guinea-pig?

With rising anger came remembrance, suddenly, like the striking of a hurricane. Remembrance of Celene Verlaines' chaotic apartment. Remembrance of Celene herself abducted from her home and carried God knew where. . .

Brandon's muscles tightened. A riptide of rage seethed through him, and he swelled his chest; surged himself against the heavy leather bands that held him helpless.

Snap!

It was bewildering. Those straps had burst open as if they had been cardboard. Brad Brandon was free!

He stood up, dizzily; tried to adjust himself to the fantastic fact that he had broken his fetters with a single outward thrust of his compact body. Now he made for a narrow doorway in the cell-like cubicle of sheet lead which housed the chair to which he had been fastened. He touched the door with his flat palm—and it burst out on its hinges like so much paper under the impact of an explosion-ray bomb!

He stepped through the opening; stared about him. Then his throat tightened and his eyes bulged from their sockets. "Celene! Celene, my sweet—!" he gasped.

LIKE a diminutive brunette goddess, Celene Verlaine lay before him, on what resembled a surgeon's operating table at the far side of this laboratory room. Her wavy midnight hair was in tumbled disarray, her dark eyes wide with fear, her sweet form bound to the table with lengths of cruel cord that cut into her white flesh. "No . . . please, no . . .!" she was whimpering; and her terror was wholly justified.

Over her loomed a giant Mongol, his lips leering, his slanted eyes narrowed to slits. He held a long, scalpel-sharp knife in one yellow, clawlike hand; and the blade's point was inexorably descending toward the helpless girl's heart!

Brad Brandon bashed himself into motion. Amazingly, one single mighty leap carried him across the intervening distance—a leap of fantastic proportions. Then he came to grips with the giant Mongol.

"Got you, by God!" he snarled. And he hurled a punch at the Asiatic; a punch that struck the fellow's knife-wrist with a sound like the splintering of rotten wood. The Mongol's weapon went humming across the room like a ray-bolt; twanged point first in the wall and buried itself there, all the way to the jeweled hilt.

And the giant Asiatic himself staggered backward with a banshee howl of pain, his arm dangling weirdly—broken in three places!

But the battle was not yet finished, Brandon realized. Even though partially disabled, that lumbering yellow man was a fighter to be reckoned with;

a fighter now made maniac-mad by excruciating pain. Mouthing Cantonese curses, he gathered himself to charge at the enemy who had fractured his arm.

Brandon stood firm, legs straddled wide, his fists balled, a curious maelstrom of strength churning through every fiber of his stocky frame. He had no idea how he'd been able to hit his giant adversary such a punishing blow; the whole thing was inexplicably comparable to his other accomplishment of a moment ago when he had burst his leather bonds without conscious effort. Nor did he care. It was enough that this strange new strength was in his sinews, affording him the chance to protect the girl he loved.

"Come on, swine!" he challenged. And the Mongol giant came forward like an avalanche of doom.

But his attack was arrested in midair, as if by the clutch of some invisible hand. One instant the yellow man was moving; the next, he fell sprawling to the floor as if blackjacked. And the entire back of his skull was a charred horror from the kiss of a lethal-ray blast!

A silken, purring voice chortled: "It is just as well that I slew him. He had outlived his usefulness to me, anyhow, After he kidnaped you two, I had no more need of him."

Brad Brandon whirled; stared. "What in hell's name—?"

THE weird individual who slithered toward him was like a nightmare caricature—a tall, skeletal figure swathed in death black robe and monk's hood cowl. Against this cerement blackness the fellow's face was a pock-scarred and jaundiced mask; a hideous travesty of countenance, like a lipless skull covered with parchment stretched to the splitting point. Looking at him, you recognized him as half-caste Oriental; you saw the malignant glitter of his almond eyes, the evil mockery of a smile on the lipless mouth. And you cringed at the very ugliness of him—or at least Brad Brandon did.

But only for an instant. Then Brandon regained his self control.

"Who the devil are you? Put down that ray-gun, you murderous devil!"

Surprisingly enough the black-robed man obeyed, tossing his weapon aside with a casual gesture. At the same time he wrapped his bony fingers around a switch on an instrument panel near the operating table to which Celene Verlaine was tied.

"Of course I relinquish my gun," he chuckled again. "Since I have no desire to kill you." Then the silk ripped away from his voice and left it raw, rasping. "But if you attempt to jump me, I shall pull this switch—and your fiancee dies."

"What——?" Brandon growled.

"It is quite true, my friend. The girl lies under a bank of ray tubes. One jolt of power will roast her lovely figure to a very nasty crisp."

Brad Brandon glanced upward; realized that the skeletal man was not bluffing. There was indeed a bank of lethal-ray projectors above Celene Verlaine's helpless form—the kind of ray that had long ago been perfected for short distance death-dealing, but which had no place in modern warfare because the force was dissipated beyond twenty feet.

Celene squirmed against her fetters.

"Brad . . . no . . . don't antagonize him . . . he'll k-kill me. . . !"

Brandon held himself in strict check. He faced the man in the black robe.

"Very well. I won't jump you. But for God's sake tell me what this is all about! Who are you? Why did you have Miss Verlaine kidnaped? Why was I brought here?"

"One thing at a time, my friend. Let me introduce myself. I am Professor Lai-Hu Nochigawa—in the service of His Supremacy, the Dictator of Japanasia."

THE NAME meant nothing to Brad Brandon. But its connotation clarified many hitherto unexplained things. Beyond doubt, this Nochigawa was here in the United States to bore from within; to sap at the foundations of American defense.

"But what has that to do with me—and with Celene Verlaine?"

The yellow man displayed his teeth, unpleasantly.

"You will soon know, my friend. Turn around, slowly. That is good. Walk toward that desk over there. Look carefully. Tell me what you see."

For the sake of his fiancee's safety, Brandon obeyed each command. And now, reaching a teakwood desk, he stared downward—and gasped:

"A rocket plane propulsion unit! The kind I assemble at the factory!"

"Precisely, my friend," Nochigawa's voice was silken again. "It is a duplicate of the unit on which you work. Of course you will notice those vanadachrome bolts already in place, as if to be affixed to a plane's tail-assembly."

"Yes. What of them?"

"You will pick up the socket-wrench you see there. You will cinch those bolts tight. Pretend you are at your factory job; do exactly as you would do on the assembly line."

Bewildered, not daring to refuse the apparently pointless order, Brandon lifted the socket-wrench and fitted it to a bolthead. He twisted—

And the bolt screeched metallic protest as it split apart!

Brad Brandon hurled the wrench aside; spun around.

"What crazy nonsense is this? That head was defective. A flaw in the machining, probably; or maybe a crack in the metal itself, not caught by Roentgen-ray inspection. So what?"

"So you are quite wrong, my friend," Nochigawa grinned. "I assure you there was no defect in the part."

"Then how——"

"You broke it," the yellow man chortled. "You merely broke it with the strength of your own two hands."

Brandon blinked his stupefaction.

"You're crazy! No man on earth could ever be strong enough to split electrohardened vanadachrome with his fingers! Why, I——" Then he stopped in midsentence, remembering two very puzzling facts.

FIRST, there was his unexplained ability to burst out of the bonds that had held him to the insulaplastic chair a while ago; his curious sense of exaltation and well-being. Second, he recalled how he had struck the giant Mongol a glancing blow on the wrist—and shattered the fellow's arm in three places.

Could these things be linked with his astonished breaking of the bolt-head just now? Was it somehow possible that he had suddenly acquired a fantastic strength beyond measuring?

"I refuse to believe it," he snapped. "It's a trick of some sort!"

Again Nochigawa showed his snaggle teeth.

"A trick, yes. A scientific trick, with you as the subject. An experiment that has proven most fruitful." And he kept his bony hand on the switch that would blast Celene Verlaine to death if Brad Brandon should make a wrong move.

Brandon glared at him impotently. "Nonsense!"

"Not at all. When you came out of that lead-lined chamber did you not smash the door almost off its hinges?

And when you rushed at my Mongol servant as he leaned over your fiancee with a knife, did you not cover the distance in one mighty leap?"

"I wanted to protect her," Brandon growled.

"Of course. That was why I staged the scene: to test you. To see if you had absorbed the power of three sixty-six."

"Three sixty-six—?"

"Yes, my friend. I allude to the wave-length radiation at 3.66 meter; a radiation to which I exposed you inside the lead-lined chamber. It was an exposure of ten minutes, while you were unconscious."

Brad Brandon's forehead wrinkled.

"I don't get it. I don't get any part of it."

His skeletal tormentor said: "I shall explain as briefly as I can. A hundred years ago there was a telephone laboratory scientist who conducted some experiments with ultra-short waves. This experimenter's name was Englund,* I believe. In any event, with his radiation equipment he descended the wave-scale from four meters to one meter at an extremely small wattage output."

"Well——?"

"It is very simple, my friend. Everything proceeded smoothly until this Englund tuned his transmitter to 3.66 meters. At that wave length he got no radiation whatver. He checked and re-checked with the assistance of many helpers, but the result was uniformly the same: no radiation at 3.66 meter."

"And so—?"

"They dropped the matter, considering it unimportant and perhaps dangerous. I revived the experiment, my friend. I perfected it with modern equipment. You have been exposed to heavy radiations at 3.66 meters* — and the result is obvious. For twenty-four hours your atomic structure will remain charged with this force; and during that time you are a man among men, a superior being with the strength of ten hundred ordinary mortals. *You are a temporary superman!*"

THE WORDS smashed at Brad Brandon's consciousness with staggering impact. If this evil yellow man's wild, implausible theory were true, then anything could happen. Brandon was master of his own destiny, potentially the conqueror of any enemy. He could not be hurt, either by blows or lethal rays; he was superior to the power of any man to harm him!

Then why should he stand here motionless, held at bay by a half-caste Japanasian professor as thin and bloodless as a skeleton?

To think was to act. Brandon hefted the rocket-propulsion unit on which he had just splintered a vanadachrome bolt; lifted it in one hand as if it might have been a feather, although it weighed a good three hundred pounds. One quick flip would send it smashing through the air to pulp Nochigawa's ugly skull; then this fantastic farce would be finished—

But Nochigawa seemed to read Brandon's seething thoughts.

"I warn you! My hand is on this switch. You might slay me with that unit, yes; but in falling I shall certainly close the circuit which will take your

* C. L. Englund, a Bell Telephone laboratory scientist.—Ed.

* It seems that Englund realized what was taking place. By accident he had hit upon the fundamental wave length of the living human body. In exact resonance with the transmitter, he and his assistants were absorbing all the energy it radiated. In brief, they were mobile parasitic antennae. Thanks to the low watt output, no harm had come to them in absorbing the radiated energy; but apparently they labored under the delusion that higher wattage might have been deadly. Hence they abandoned any further tests in that direction.—Ed.

sweetheart to death with me!"

From the table where she was trussed, the white-faced Celene Verlaine wailed:

"Brad—for God's sake, no—don't do it! He'll k-kill me—!"

Brandon lowered the unit, knowing that he was beaten; knowing that he could not, he dared not, risk Celene's life. And as he placed the heavy propulsion assembly back on the desk, he saw the imprints of fingers marked upon the steel casing, as deeply as if pressed in dough. His own finger-marks, where he had clenched the unit and squeezed it out of shape!

That was bitter irony, to possess such strength and to be manacled by psychic gyves even stronger!

"Damn you," he said grimly to Nochigawa. "Damn your black soul to hell, what is it you want of me? What must I do to buy Celene's freedom?"

The yellow man's eyes glowed in their sunken sockets, like embers of evil.

"It will be an easy price to pay, my friend. You will return to your post at the plane plant. You will do your job on the assembly line as if nothing had happened. But on every unit you will use your full strength upon one single keystone-bolt, just as you did here a moment ago."

"God! You mean—"

"Yes. You will split just one bolt on each unit; not enough for the flaw to be detected at final inspection, but with sufficient force to crack the metal underneath."

BRANDON went ghost-pale.

"Do you realize what you're asking? It will mean that every rocket plane taken into the air for a test hop will throw its propulsion tubes the first time full power is applied!"

"Naturally," his tormentor agreed silkily. "And those test-hopped planes, deprived of their propulsion units, will fall out of control. When the wrecks are examined, the flawed bolts will come to light. The government inspectors will blame imperfect design, never guessing that such damage could have been done by one pair of human hands. Clever, eh?"

Brad Brandon clenched his helpless fists. This hellish scheme could have but one eventual outcome. Blaming improper design, the new rocket craft would be scrapped pending further improvement. That would mean new machine tooling, costly delay. Months. And meanwhile the Dictator of Japanasia would strike at the West Coast in full force. . . !

"Well, my friend?" Nochigawa purred. "Wil you obey, or do you prefer to forfeit your sweetheart's life?"

There seemed no way out. Brandon realized the impossibility of resistance now. He was cornered—because of Celene. For her sake he must agree; or at least he must pretend capitulation. Maybe, if he got out of this house, he would have time to think; time to plan some counter move. But for the moment, surrender was his only course.

He bowed his head.

"What else can I do?" he muttered. "Yes, I'll obey."

"Good!" the yellow half-caste chortled. "Now begone. Get back to your factory, my friend. And remember, your fiancee remains here until I hear news of the first plane crashing. Unless that happens soon . . . well, you can imagine what steps I shall take." And his eyes licked over Celene's bound form.

Battling back the churning rage that swirled through him like a cosmic cyclone, Brad Brandon turned toward the door. He had seen Nochigawa blast that giant Mongol servant as callously as a lesser man might crush a fly; he knew the half-caste held utter con-

tempt for human life. What chance had Celene Verlaine against a fiend like that? None; unless Brandon managed to turn the tables before it was too late. And this seemed impossible, the way things stood.

THERE was no leaping exaltation in his heart now; no sensation of well-being. The strength he had acquired by exposure to the energy radiations at 3.66 meters still hummed in his sinews; but it was a bitter strength, a futile and ironic power which he would be compelled to use against his homeland in order to save the girl he loved. In all history, he told himself, no man had faced such a hideous decision.

It was all so queer, he thought as he left Nochigawa's residence by the rear exit. A single stride could vault him to the opposite sidewalk if he wanted to test his super-self; an easy jump would carry him to the roof of the tallest building within view. The fragrance of the midnight was sharp in his newly sensitized nostrils, moist and cool and pungent; the very breeze had the taste of approaching springtime, the flavor of green things budding. Even his ears picked up faint sounds no human had ever before heard: the rustle of an ant over a pebble, the beating wings of a moth in flight—

And the panted breathing of a woman!

It was this, so faint that ordinary ears could not have detected it, that caused Brad Brandon to freeze and then to fling himself silently around the corner in search of the sound's source. There had been something vaguely familiar in the whimpered moan, some half-recognizable factor he could not quite place; but a quickened sixth sense told him it was a matter he must investigate.

He gained the lightless street on which Nochigawa's house faced. For the sake of better vantage he put his surcharged muscles to the test; sprang without sound, straight upward into the air. The explosive leap carried him to the roof cornice; he grasped at a projection and swung there, a silent and compact pendulum of power. Then, with vision made preternaturally acute by the 3.66 radiations, he focused on the feminine figure at Nochigawa's front door.

She was young and slender and blonde, and she was wearing a topcoat over silken negligee.

"My God!" Brad Brandon breathed. *"It's Nalya Gerrard!"*

BLACK ANGER erupted bomblike in the depths of Brandon's soul as he recognized her, saw her open that front door and slip into the house. Her presence here, her seemingly familiar access to the place, looked impossible to misconstrue. *Nalya was one of the half-caste Japanasian professor's accomplices!*

There could be no other possible explanation. Why else would she possess a key to this demense of hell-fiends? It was galling medicine for Brad Brandon to swallow; yet he was forced to believe.

Now he could understand why the golden-haired Nalya, his friend from childhood, had lied to him about not hearing a commotion in Celene Verlaine's apartment. Perhaps Nalya herself had been implicated in Celene's abduction. At least she was patently involved with Nochigawa; that much was all too evident.

For a moment Brandon forgot his job at the plane plant; the job of sabotage into which he was being forced. He knew only a consuming hatred of the blonde Nalya Gerrard, a hatred so vaulting that he wondered at its vastness. He asked himself why he should

feel such savage resentment toward this yellow-haired girl, merely because she was a traitor to her country. Why should it mean so much to him?

The nation was infiltrated with spies and saboteurs and enemy agents, he realized. Nochigawa's presence in America was proof enough of that. Then what difference did it make to Brad Brandon if a casual feminine acquaintance should prove to be in league with the Japanasians?

But that was just the trouble. Nalya Gerrard was not a mere casual acquaintance. She was a friend, a trusted and proven pal. Oddly enough, Brandon was now remembering her the way he had seen her at her apartment doorway earlier tonight, clad in diaphanous negligee, her dulcet figure sweetly emphasized by the silken material, her azure eyes starry with hidden emotions . . .

The recollection stirred his rage to bubbling fury. He was abruptly aware that Nalya represented something to him; that she always had. And the discovery of her perfidy shook his soul to its foundations.

He determined to learn more concerning her connections with Nochigawa. Nothing else mattered. Other things could wait. Nalya Gerrard had destroyed his faith, shattered his illusions. For this, he told himself grimly, she would pay!

LIKE a wraith he flipped himself up onto the roof roper; sought for some means of ingress to the house. There seemed to be none. Then he remembered his super-strength; and his lips curled in a sardonic grin. He jammed his fingers experimentally into the roof's copper sheathing—

And the metal gave spongily under his attack, like so much cheese!

He ripped away a section of it, as easily as a normal man might peel rotten fruit—and as silently, for he wanted the occupants of the house to have no warning of his approach. Now there was a black, yawning hole exposed before him. He peered down with power-sharpened eyes, saw a littered attic. He lowered himself, swung by his fingertips, dropped.

Lynx-lithe he landed, and ghost-quiet he made for a ladder that led down into the house proper. Then, on the third floor, he stopped as if turned to stone.

Below him, voices sounded; voices muffled by intervening walls and ceiling, yet crystal clear to his hypersensitive hearing. Nochigawa was talking, and Celene Verlaine was answering.

Celene was laughing!

For a split instant, Brandon thought it must be a trick of his overwrought imagination. But there it was again, that blithe and airy conversation with its tinkling overtones of Celene Verlaine's laughter . . .

"He fell for it, the fool!" she was saying. "He actually believed you might kill me with the lethal ray!"

Then Nochigawa's silken chortle: "He believed—because he is blinded by his infatuation for you, my dear. You have done an excellent job in hooking this Brandon idiot. Once he accomplishes our purpose and sabotages that new rocket plane design, we will make an end to him. Then America will topple before our glorious invading troops—and His S u p r e m a c y, the Dictator of Japanasia, might even reward you with a medal for your part in our conquest of the western world!"

Listening on the floor above, Brad Brandon felt his senses reeling. First Nalya Gerrard, and now Celene Verlaine—both in the pay of this murderous half-caste enemy agent! And he, Brandon, had l o v e d Celene; had planned to make her his wife!

"God!" he whispered. "The whole thing was a hoax! Celene's kidnaping... Nochigawa's threat to kill her unless I wrecked those propulsion unit keybolts . . . a rotten, hellish hoax, all of it!"

But there was one phase of the plot that had *not* been a hoax. That was Brad Brandon's exposure to the power emanations at radiation wave length 3.66! This had been real, the one genuine thing in a welter of spurious tales and counterfeit movements. He still possessed his super-strength; he would possess it for another twenty-four hours!

"And all I need is five minutes!" he rumbled in the depths of his throat. Then he started downstairs like an evangel of destruction. This house and all its occupants would tumble in ruins before he was finished, he vowed savagely. He made for the door of the laboratory.

It was open. And the voices of Nochigawa and Celene Verlaine had gone suddenly silent. Brandon, staring inside, saw why.

NALYA GERRARD had entered the room through a side door. Now she confronted the brunette girl and the half-caste yellow man; held them at bay with a ray-gun gripped in her steady little fist.

She was like some superb, golden-haired huntress as she faced the guilty pair.

"I heard!" she spoke bitterly. "I got in by picking the lock of your front door. And I heard!"

Nochigawa's face was a jaundiced saffron mask, pock-pitted, bestial, working.

"Put down that gun, you fool!"

"Oh, no! Not until you tell me what's become of Brad Brandon—the man I love!"

Outside the main laboratory door, Brandon himself felt a scalpel-sharp sensation cutting through the impervious stupidity that had long cloaked him. Now, suddenly, he understood why he had been so infuriated at the thought of Nalya Gerrard's illicit connection with America's enemies. He knew why she had meant so much to him.

He knew—because he loved her. He had always loved her, but he had been blind to it. Blind to her beauty. Blind to her sweetly sympathetic nature. He had accepted her as a matter of course, not realizing how she felt toward him; not realizing the heartaches he had dealt her through his mad infatuation for the brunette Celene Verlaine!

And now Nalya was in that laboratory, holding the Japanasian saboteurs at the point of a ray-gun. Doing it because of her loyalty to Brad Brandon!

She spoke again, her eyes contemptuously on the brunette girl.

"When Brad told me you had been kidnaped I sensed something wrong. Why hadn't I heard the struggle, when my apartment is just a few doors from yours?"

"Smart, aren't you?" Celene squalled.

"Smart enough to guess that you had set your cap for Brad because of some hidden purpose. I'd watched you luring him on, baiting him with your kisses . . . and I knew you didn't really care for him. My heart told me that! I knew you wanted him only because of his position on the assembly line of the rocket plane plant."

The brunette girl's lips curled. "A mind-reader!"

"A character reader," Nalya corrected savagely. "So when Brad left the apartment, I put on a topcoat and followed him. I saw a big Mongol knock him unconscious, carry him

away. I followed. I watched him being brought into this house—the house of Professor Nochigawa, a Japanasian."

"And I suppose you've got the cops coming?"

"No. I was afraid to call the police; I didn't want them to find Brad in here. It might have placed him under suspicion of sabotage activity—or at least cost him his job. So I waited almost an hour; then I forced my way in."

"And—?" Celene sneered.

"And I want Brad Brandon. You'll tell me what you've done to him—or you'll take a ray-blast across that pretty face of yours!" Nalya stepped closer to the dark-haired girl.

THE move was ill-advised. It gave Nochigawa an instant in which to act; and he seized his chance. He slithered at Nalya Gerrard, struck her a full-fisted blow before she could pull aside. She went flurrying across the room; landed semi-conscious on the operating table.

Outside the door, Brad Brandon came out of the motionless thralldom the scene had put upon him. An exultant rage exploded in his veins, coursed through his stocky frame. Nalya was no traitor! She had risked her life to save him—and now was the time for repayment of the debt!

Like a cataclysm he launched himself into the laboratory, his leaping strides shaking the very floor.

"You foul ape of hell!" he roared at Nochigawa in a voice of thunder; and he made for his enemy's skinny throat.

The Japanasian squealed like a cornered rat; backed toward his electrical instrument panel.

"Take one more step and I pull the switch!" he caterwauled. "Stand back or I'll blast your blonde woman to a cinder! I warn you!"

Brandon froze. It was true; Nalya Gerrard lay inert across the operating table, directly under the ray-tubes. She was conscious; but she seemed incapable of movement. In another instant the tubes would glow green-red and her dulcet body would roast beneath waves of invisible heat.

Nochigawa was grinning now.

"This time I have the one you really care for, my friend. I can see that now. And there is no hoax in this situation. The game is mine, do you understand? I've won!"

Brad Brandon faced him. What good was his super-strength now? What was the use of the energized power thrumming in his sinews?

"You've won, damn you!" he muttered. "What are your terms?"

"The same as before. You shall resume your position at the plane plant; sabotage those propulsion units. Otherwise—"

On the ray-table, still paralyzed by the Japanasian's fist-blow yet fully cognizant of what went on, the golden-haired Nalya moaned:

"Brad . . . get him! Never m-mind about me . . . I don't matter now. It's the rocket plane we m-must think about; the ships that will beat the Dictator . . ."

It was her decision, her supreme sacrifice. And as she spoke, Brandon went into action.

But he did not catapult himself at Nochigawa. Instead, he plucked at the brunette Celene Verlaine, the girl who had duped him and used him as a tool. He lifted her and hurled her straight at her half-caste master.

She went sailing across the laboratory like a flung stone; and even as her screams dinned hideously at Brandon's sensitized eardrums, Nochigawa closed his switch.

IT was the last voluntary thing he ever did. From now on, his movements were pure reflex—the motions of a madman seeking a handhold on life. By ray-blasting Nalya Gerrard, he had erased his power over Brad Brandon; for Brandon no longer had any reason to withhold his vengeance!

Celene Verlaine's hurtling figure smashed at the yellow man, impeded him as he tried to scuttle away. He thrust her from him; kicked at her as she went down. Somehow the toe of his shoe took her at the nape of the neck; there was a sickening crunch of shattered vertebrae. Then the brunette woman lay limp, her head at a grotesque death-angle, her neck broken.

"You murderous swine!" Brad Brandon said as he plunged at the killer. Nochigawa eluded him, scurried to a far corner like some trapped and repulsive animal. Brandon ripped the instrument panel from its connections, though it must have weighed six hundred pounds. He threw it.

Again Nochigawa darted aside; and the heavy panel shattered against the wall where he had crouched. Once more the weird chase began; again Brandon hurled the first thing he got his hands on. This time it was the sheet-lead shield that had enclosed the insulaplastic chair with its radiation-energy equipment.

And this time the unwieldy missile found its target; squashed the Japanasian like a juiceless cockroach.

Across a laboratory piled high with chaotic wreckage, Brad Brandon arrowed toward the operating table where he had last seen his golden-haired Nalya. He forced himself to look at the table, knowing what he must inevitably find; knowing what horror the death-ray tubes could wreak upon soft white flesh . . .

But Nalya wasn't on the table!

Then he heard her voice, soft, quavering, dulcet, from somewhere beneath the ruinous shambles.

"Brad . . . I'm here . . . I rolled off the table just before he closed the switch . . ."

With a great sobbing cry of thanksgiving, Brandon found her and lifted her upright; cradled her in his arms.

"Nalya, beloved! You're alive!"

"Y-yes, Brad. And—"

"And tonight's hell is ended," he told her gently. "The rocket planes will roll off the production line. There will be no invasion from Japanasia; no dictators; no more Nochigawas or double-crossing Celenes. I love you, Nalya."

She clung to him.

"Brad . . . you're so strong . . ."

Yes, he was strong with the strength artificially acquired from the radiations at 3.66 meters. But that would pass, just as this night was passing. And then he would find a new strength—in his work, and in his love. He would no longer be a superman; but he would always be strong . . . for Nalya.

"Something's wrong, Sarg, it just goes 'pitooie' and won't kill a fly!"

Scientific

THE MATTO GROSSO OF BRAZIL – MOST MYSTERIOUS REGION ON EARTH – ! ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF EXPLORATION COULD NOT EXHAUST ITS SECRETS .

AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT DISCOVERED BY SENHOR LAGOS, BRAZILIAN HISTORIAN, TELLS OF A LOST WORLD, AND OF MOUNTAIN PEAKS OF CRYSTAL .

LT. COL. P.H. FAWCETT VANISHED MYSTERIOUSLY IN THIS REGION, AND WILD RUMOR SAYS A WHITE MYSTERY-RACE KIDNAPPED HIM .

FAWCETT KNEW OF WHITE INDIANS, WHO SPOKE SANSKRIT – AND OF A TRIBE OF WOMEN WARRIORS WHO STILL EXIST . .

Mysteries

By JOSEPH J. MILLARD

The Matto Grosso is one of the most mysterious unexplored regions still existing on the earth

AMERICAN explorers have traveled half-way around the world, time and again, to tear away the veils of mystery from unexplored regions of the earth. Americans have climbed the unclimable Himalayas, have dug fossils from the Gobi Desert, have invaded the fastnesses of forbidden Thibet and the secret temples of India. American scientific expeditions have mapped the arctic and antarctic, have thrown light on the Dark Continent of Africa and explored the mysteries of long-dead races on islands of the South Seas.

But here, almost at our own doorstep, lie two million square miles of mysterious land unexplored and unmapped—rivers on which no craft but Indian canoes have ever sailed, mountains no civilized man has ever climbed or seen except as vague, menacing shadows in the distance, paths no booted foot has ever trod.

The Matto Grosso of Brazil—the most mysterious region on the face of the globe!

The whole world of science and exploration could turn its undivided attention to the Matto Grosso region for the next hundred years without exhausting its wealth of discoveries or solving even a tenth of its bewildering mysteries. We know that it is a region rich beyond belief in gold and silver and diamonds and countless other treasures. We know it is a land of great walled cities and paved roads, ancient and abandoned now but evidence of the mightiest civilization that ever inhabited the earth. We know it is a land of savage Indians with white skin, blue eyes and blond hair and a land of persistent rumors so incredible that science is almost afraid to probe them for fear the whole structure of history and science may be upset by what is found.

The Matto Grosso itself is a vast twilight land of dense swamps, impenetrable jungles and, far inland, some of the most forbidding mountains on earth. It is cut by numerous rivers of immense width but so cut by vicious rapids that boat travel is restricted to a few miles near their mouths.

ACCORDING to the geologist Troussart and Lund, this region was the first land on earth to emerge from the primeval floods of the Tertiary Epoch of the Miocene Age and as such may well be the true cradle of mankind so long hunted in other parts of the world. Yet, amazingly, these same daring adventures and explorers who have mapped so many other wild regions of the globe give South America, and especially the province of Matto Grosso, a wide berth.

Colonel P. H. Fawcett, the British explorer, vanished into this mystery land fifteen years ago. Although rumors still persist that Fawcett and his party are still alive, prisoners of a strange race of savage white men, the British government has made less effort to find him than they ordinarily do to rescue a subject from a desert island. Even the hardiest of explorers have little stomach for a region that makes exploration in the heart of Africa seem like a Sunday School picnic.

Only one party of white men has ever penetrated the Matto Grosso and lived to tell of their experiences. These were Portuguese *bandeiristas* in search of the Lost Silver Mines of Moribeca. In 1743 this little band vanished into the *sertao* and vanished from the sight of man for ten years. Then, in 1753, a ragged band of half-dead scarecrows staggered out of the twilight world into a little *povoacao* in upland Bahia province with the most incredible story the world has ever heard. The story was, in fact, so fantastic that the manuscript of it was tucked away and forgotten for nearly two hundred years.

It was a tale of a Lost World that vanished into the ocean thousands of years before the first Egyptian pyramid was even planned, of a race and a language and a writing unknown to the world of today. It was a tale that remains unverified even now, except for a growing mass of evidence that cannot be ignored much longer by the scientists and explorers. The original manuscript, rediscovered in 1841 by senior Lagos, a Brazilian historian, is still in the royal public library of Rio de Janeiro where it was examined and photostated within the past two years by W. C. Burdett, American Consul General to Rio, on behalf of researchers.

IN THIS incredible manuscript, the writer tells of journeying inland for years until they came in sight of a mountain range so immense that it

staggered their senses, for it seemed to rise up among the very stars themselves. But what was most amazing was the fact that the higher peaks of this range were apparently composed of immense crystals that caught the rays of the sun and threw out beams of blinding light in all directions.

Seeking to get closer to the mysterious flaming mountains, the adventurers came upon an incredibly ancient paved road that led them to a gigantic walled city on a high plateau. The city was so vast, in fact, that at first they thought they had somehow circled around and stumbled on the capital of Brazil. Then they saw that the entire vast city was empty and deserted, smashed as if by a terrific earthquake.

Entering the city, the band found great temples, statues and beautiful buildings adorned with carvings. Although modern scientists aver that South America had no early written language, the Portuguese found innumerable carvings of a strange writing on stones and walls and the canny leader copied some of them in his manuscript. They have never been translated but have characters resembling ancient Greek and Arabic.

Outside the city proper, they found what resembled a great summer house of stone with a frontage of two hundred and fifty feet and innumerable rich carvings. Nearby they found bars of pure silver and traces of rich gold deposits in the soil. Around the city itself (in which, strangely, not a blade of grass or living plant of any kind could be found) were vast fields with such a profusion of flowers that the travelers were aghast at its wealth of color. Later they found rich mines close by.

On the way out from their discovery, the band saw white men in strange dress but these mysterious inhabitants fled when the adventurers approached. When the survivors finally reached civilization, jealous plotters hid the manuscript, intending to find and appropriate the rich mineral wealth reported. Nothing was ever done about returning to the great city, however, and the manuscript was not found until 1841.

There have been however, innumerable authoritative reports of mysterious races and lost cities in that region. It is thought that at one time the lowland was flooded by an arm of the sea and there are evidences that earthquakes, bringing the ocean inland, caused the destruction of a vast empire that might have been the original home of the Incas, Aztecs and Mayas. The persistent reports, both by white men and natives, of having seen *bearded* white Indians with blond or red hair and blue eyes, are particularly significant because the legends of later races all refer to bearded white men who came from across the sea to the east.

COUNTLESS ancient writings of Egyptians, Romans and other Mediterranean races, refer to a great land beyond the sea and there is growing evidence that at some time in the world's past there was definite commerce between South America and Europe—probably via the lost continent of Atlantis. A few years ago, armor and weapons covered with ancient Greek inscriptions were dug up in Brazil. The Toltecs, ancestors of the Aztecs, have a legend that they came originally from Aztlan, *across the sea.* The gods of the beardless Mayas are bearded *white* men.

The very name of Brazil indicates something of the mystery. It is an ancient name, borne by that land thousands of years before the arrival of the first Portuguese explorers. Strangely, there is even today a legend in Ireland about Hy-Brazil, a Gaelic paradise *far across the Western Ocean* and about forbidding Callan Mountain where lie the bones of Irish king Conane whose tomb bears a key that will bring back the ancient city sunk beneath the ocean. About 1,500 years ago, the Irish Saint Brendan took fifty monks from the Abbey of Clonfert and sailed over the ocean in search of Hy-Brazil. He found it after seven years of journeying and his description, still surviving today, is an excellent picture of a Brazil supposedly undiscovered at that time.

There is, beyond any reasonable doubt, a mysterious link between all the ancient races of the earth. More and more, science is beginning to accept the legends of Atlantis as at least a basis of fact. But Atlantis is gone—and Brazil's Matto Grosso still remains. According to many legends and implications, the leading colonies of Atlantis were in this land and must still be there, waiting to reveal the truth to science.

A few years ago, stones were found on the fringe of the Matto Grosso jungle bearing signs and pictures with a striking resemblance to the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt. In 1890, a stone found in the jungles of Ceylon was reported to bear Asoka-Buddhist characters identical with certain characters of Hy-Brazil and similar to Arabic and Phoenician forms.

Little is known of the races inhabiting Matto Grosso's shadowy interior but both Indians and outside explorers by the dozens have reported amazing glimpses of them. In fact, the belief in a race of Amazons, or women warriors, long believed only a myth, has been revived by reports of missionaries who claim to have actually seen white warrior women with classic Grecian features, driving Indian slaves to battle.

Colonel Fawcett himself saw and reported many unbelievable facts. His last message to civilization told of incredibly vast ruined cities in the jungles —cities lighted night and day by brilliant rays from immense crystals. In one, he reported, was a great square crystal on a high pillar whose shining dazzled the eyes of all for miles around and lit the city with an eternal light.

THERE are many stories that a white race still rules on a high plateau far inland -a race possessed of a science and a power almost beyond belief. It is told, and has been for generations, that these survivors of an earlier lost race that

once over-ran the world, know the secret of eternal light and of storing the light of the sun in strange crystal cells. Such stories crop up amazingly, too, in other lands of the globe to indicate a common source in some ancient truth. Even today science has no explanation for intricate and beautiful paintings found far inside the caves of ancient mankind in France—paintings where no daylight could ever fall. Yet these works of art show no evidences of smoke as they would if painted by torch-light and the colors are far more pure and accurately blended and selected than they could be by artificial light. In fact, some of the paintings are even thought to antedate the discovery of fire. In Egypt, too, are elaborate frescoes and paintings in inner chambers of the Pyramids where nothing but feeble torch-light could ever reach them—unless an earlier race who built those pyramids knew the secret of artificial illumination.

This is but another of the secrets that may be revealed when man explores the Matto Grosso. There are, however, countless other mysteries as yet unsolved.

Among the modern savage inhabitants of the region are many who would furnish anthropologists a lifetime of study. On an earlier expedition, Colonel Fawcett stumbled onto a tribe of savages in the Matto Grosso possessed of strange and uncanny powers. For one thing, they know exactly when anyone is approaching their domain, without the use of scouts, spies, or any signaling system.

Actually, these savages are but little more than man-like animals. They live in burrows in the ground, great hollows that are covered with wickerwork lids and since they cannot endure the rays of the sun, they sleep all day in these holes. At night, they come out to hunt with their crude weapons, which are only rough clubs. They have no knowledge of fire. Although low in mentality, these Indians have eyesight and a sense of smell far keener than even that of a hunting dog. They can track any person or animal through the jungles simply by sniffing his tracks. They are cannibals, but Colonel Fawcett and his party succeeded in making the savages think they were gods and so escaped.

Many Indians claim to trade with a race of white men who live far inland in a city of gold. In the late nineteen-twenties a German, Herr Doktor Wilhelm Bahrt, set out up the Amazon in search of a gold hoard. Leaving the river, they met a tribe of bearded Indians whose women were white-skinned and all had queer, reddish eyes. Nearby they found a vast stone city whose walls were all sheathed with thin plates of pure gold. Pillars and statues were covered with thicker gold, carved in what the Herr Doktor described as resembling the ancient runes. In 1841 a group of travelers told of seeing the mountains with the crystal peaks and of approaching a vast ancient city. But as they drew near, drums beat in the city and great streams of fire like rockets shot skyward, at which the travelers fled in some haste. There is meat for the writers of science fiction. The teller of this tale, by the way, was no wild-eyed dreamer but a canon and a professor of Bahia college.

WITH all these intriguing mysteries added to the lure of wealth beyond man's greatest dreams, it is a major mystery in itself why more explorers do not attempt the perilous penetration of the Matto Grosso or Green Hell, as it is known. Much, of course, is due to the very fact that no one penetrates the land and lives long to brag of his success. Legends of a curse that overhangs the land seem borne out by history. Traveler after traveler has made some sensational discovery, only to vanish or suffer a worse fate soon after. But the mysteries still beckon.

Colonel Fawcett had definite evidence of the existence in the Matto Grosso, of cities dating back to 50,000 and 60,000 B. C. He knew of white Indians with beards, blue eyes and red hair; of native words that were startlingly similar to Sanskrit; of legends that a Norse God, Odin, was worshipped in the wilds. He was almost certain that a tribe of Amazons or women warriors actually exist there today and that somewhere in that region lies a vast treasure cached there by Quetzalcoatl, the bearded white god of the Aztecs and Toltecs.

How many great mysteries still lie, unguessed, beyond those swamps and jungles nobody knows but there must be countless thousands yet unreported. Those who know are convinced that Colonel Fawcett found his goal, a white civilization of an age and with a science incredible today, and years from now he may return to the world to tell his story. But there are many others who, while believing that Colonel Fawcett *did* find these survivors of the world's oldest rulers, believe that he is remaining there of his own free will.

Who knows but what Colonel Fawcett really did find what he was seeking—a civilization whose culture and scientific knowledge makes our present stage of life look like barbarism? If such a race of mankind exists, it might be one of two possibilities—either the ancestor-race of all mankind whose highly evolved civilization was almost wiped out by the deluge until only a fragment remained to take refuge in these mountain fastnesses—or, as others have whispered, beings from another world.

But whatever may be the answer to the riddle of eternal lights, rising rockets, incredible ruined cities and evidences of a common fountain-head of speech and writing, the world will be the richer in both knowledge and physical wealth when mankind finally conquers the Green Hell of the Matto Grosso.

NEXT MONTH'S MYSTERY
"Votan, the Clever Builder"
By L. Taylor Hansen

"Don't move," she warned. "I can kill you with this little thing"

1948

BY ED EARL REPP

This globe deep in the earth, and the girl who had slept centuries was the only hope against the Borers

"READY with that charge?" the call came above the slam and rattle of machinery.

Phil Burke, Captain of the National Guard, sat in the swinging operator's chair with his hands on the controls and his eyes on the depth gauge.

"All set!" Page Russell, top Sergeant, sat in the swinging chair beneath him. A metal box rested on his lap, clutched tightly in sweaty, blackened hands. Sixty times in the last three days he had squirmed out the front of the machine to place the charge. But his nerves still recoiled from the touch of that box of concentrated murder.

Three days ago they had started out from the bank of the Hudson, working under the nerve-pinching pressure of terror and determination. Seventeen miles of fresh brown mounds, zig-zag-

ging into the woods, showed how far they had come. At the bottom of each shaft reposed a charge of explosive. Gamma rays made it impossible for a Borer to pass within three hundred yards of any charge without setting it off.

In a great arc that had New York City for its center, other National Guardsmen and army regulars labored in similar machines. Desperation kept them battling to complete the zone of death that it was hoped would protect the nation's temporary capital from the hordes of Borers working day and night beneath the ground.

There were severe lines, graven deep about Phil Burke's mouth and eyes, that told of a gruelling fight with fear and fatigue. The hammering of the engine pounded on his bruised nerves. Every time the gauge caught his eye, with its two needles making a flat V, he saw the grinning red mouth of a Borer.

Borers! Two syllables that stood for slimy, gray-white hallucinations twenty feet long and as thick as logs. Bodies like jelly and teeth like steel. You could shoot those bodies to hell and still the heads and mouths crawled on as long as there was a few feet of body to push them along. The Borers were utterly blind. But their corpulent appetites guided them unerringly to every root, leaf, and shred of organic life within miles.

The depth gauge showed forty feet. Lulled by the monotonous hammering of crankshaft and gears, Phil Burke's tired body was half asleep. Suddenly the mine layer shuddered and stopped its swift descent. The reamers' deep grinding merged into a shrill whine. Higher, shriller, that whine went until Page Russell's scream could scarcely be heard:

"For God's sake, shut it off! It's driving me crazy!"

THE dropping wail of steel blades blunting themselves on something incredibly tough. Then silence; and Phil's rueful chuckle.

"Sorry! That one crept up on me. What the devil's happened?"

Page carefully placed the explosive on a rack and dropped beside the machinery. His homely features, long and unshaven, pinched as he stared at the main drive shaft.

"I thought we'd busted a shaft and the engine was running wild," he muttered. "But the thing's solid. We've struck something harder than the reamer. Or else we've pushed into a hole where the blades are biting air."

Phil was frowning at the instrument panel, trying to find a solution there. A shadow, the forerunner of a wonder that was soon to leave him stunned, passed over his face. With greasy fingers he rubbed at square, blue jowls.

"Metal doesn't come harder than those reamers," he grunted. "We've struck a cave of some sort."

Then both men were staring at each other in a sudden fear. *"A swarm of Borers might have left such a hole!"* was the thought that leaped into their minds. *"And if they did, they've already broken through our lines—"*

Phil started the motors again without a word. He backed the mine layer up a few feet. Then he cut the switch. Reaching for a flashlight, he swung onto the ladder.

"Let's have a look," was all he said.

Page opened the small door. Both stuck their heads through as Phil's hand guided the torch beam about. What they saw was a round plate of bronze at the bottom of the hole the mine layer had dug. Where the whirling blades had struck it, the metal held a brilliant lustre. But in no place had it been

as much as scratched.

Phil dropped his long legs through the door.

"If that's bronze," he gritted, "we'd better get out the whetstone and sharpen our cutters. *Uraniumite* will cut bronze like cheese, and not lose the feather edge."

Page lowered himself and both men bent over the shining metal. All the reamers had done was to burnish it and lose some of their own sharpness. Digging with his hands, Phil found that they had merely uncovered a small part of a slightly convex dome. Page stamped on it with a hard leather heel. The solid thump that resulted deepened Phil Burke's frown.

"If this has anything to do with the Borer, I want to know about it," he stated. "We'll dig a transverse shaft and get room to work in. Then we'll see what we've found. . ."

Then went back to work with the grimness of men fearing what they may find. Borers! The nickname, the horrible picture of them, had dwelt in Phil Burke's mind for months.

OUT of the sky they had come, the night of the full moon. Between dusk and daybreak, seven months ago, a swarm of small, worm-like creatures, encased in cysts, pattered down upon Earth. Astronomers reported seeing them belch from the craters of Luna.

Seventy-two hours later, all over the globe, men and women were tromping out snake-sized wrigglers. On their roofs, in cellars, in the lobbies of hotels, in hosiptals. . . With a stab of revulsion, Phil remembered the Borer he had killed in his apartment. The stench of the spilled yellow blood—!

At first it had been a sort of joke. Then it was discovered that the millions of steel-jawed creatures were growing at the rate of a foot a day! Soon they attained their maturity—twenty feet. Everywhere they went, they carried their voracious appetites and gnashing, steel jaws.

Over-populated Europe, hardest hit, massed for battle. Millions of men poured out to meet them before the great cities. That was when they learned that guns were useless. Each individual Borer had to be chopped to bits before it was stopped.

Like a sea of maggots they crawled on, covering whole plains, entire cities, clogging rivers. Great liners sank in their slips by the very weight of the Borers rooting in them.

The European nations, moving with that pig-headed psuedo-efficiency called totalitarianism, blundered this way and that. Vainglorious self-seeking prevented efficient methods. For a while it seemed the sheer weight of luckless soldiers flung against the wriggling hordes might stop them. Then the worms went underground. After that—

Phil would retain to his death-bed the memory of a thousand headlines. "London Crumbles, Prey to Borers!" "Paris, Moscow, Rome, Fall!" The creatures devoured whole cities of wooden structures in a night. Concrete skyscrapers they undermined with their burrows and brought crashing down. Then they sifted the ruins for bits of wood or human flesh.

America was having her struggles too. Here and there across the continent, hordes of Borers swept over towns and cities. An isolated swarm sprang up west of Annapolis. In twenty-fours hours the Borers were closing in on Washington. Infantry and mechanized units failed to stop the gray, squirming tide. President Adams, leaving by plane, announced the removal of the capital to New York City for the duration of the crisis. But before Adams reached New York, his plane crashed.

After that, America had more to fear than the menace of the Borers. Adams' death left the rift wide for the wedge of dictatorship. It was rumored that sabotage had caused he wrecking of his plane. For years, Fifth Columnists had been preparing to strike. Overnight they moved. General Aubyn, highest-ranking army official, declared the country under martial law. As easily as that it was a *fait accompli.* Aubyn, taking orders from Berlin the past ten years, surrounded himself with a ministry of iron-fisted zealots and moved to unite the nation under him by the simple act of wiping out the Borers.

But it was not so easy. To men like Phil Burke and Page Russell, his blind rushes this way and that were useless moves that meant eventual ruin. To say so, meant the firing squad. The army, the National Guard, the police forces, were deeply veined with Aubyn loyalists. To co-operate with the new regime was the only hope of bringing a return to sanity.

Across the water, events plowed toward a finish. In just four months—*four months!*—Europe and Asia were totally disorganized! Reports came no longer from the dying continent. Flyers told of seeing little bands of soldiers here and there, surrounded by Borers. Of glimpsing packs of madmen vying with the wild dogs for bits of flesh to eat. Europe was a vast graveyard, a dark land where civilization was dead.

TWO hours of work and Phil Burke and Page Russell were standing on the rim of the great hole they had dug, staring down at a dull metal dome about seventy-five feet in diameter.

"Whatever it is, it wasn't made by a Borer," Phil growled. "Gives me the cold shudders to look at it. It looks so —so ancient. Yet, it's the toughest metal ever poured. It's one thing even the Borers' jaws won't dent."

Page was pointing. "Looks like there might be an opening there. Just above that square contraption we uncovered."

They hurried down one of the long scoops the mine layer had left. Phil had a box of tools under his arm. Page wiped dust from the slick surface of the dome and exposed a faint line, hardly more noticeable than a crack on a white china plate. The crack enclosed a large square. But Phil's chisel failed to win the slightest purchase.

Page, scratching with a forefinger, cleaned the packed dirt from the top of the square box welded to the side of the dome, just below the door. Five bronze knobs were fixed to the top of the box. Each had its own groove; each could be moved up and down the groove at will.

"Get a load of this!" he nudged his superior. "A prehistoric combination lock! You know, I've got a hunch that if we just knew where to set these knobs, that door would open by itself."

"Professor, you amaze me!" Phil exclaimed. "But the point is, we don't know where to set them. An acetylene torch seems to be indicated. Suppose you run along and get the portable outfit out of the mine layer."

Page turned and ran up the incline, long and lanky in his brown mechanic's coveralls. Phil pushed the knobs around testingly. From some dusty archive of his mind he recollected that the ancients were supposed to be great geometricians. By way of testing, he arranged the knobs into an equilaterial triangle.

Immediately, a swift force tore the central knob from his grasp and brought it back to the bottom of the box. The rest of the knobs automatically fell into line! Phil's eyes goggled.

In the next moment he whirled. The door was standing open!

Page Russell heard his delighted yell as he emerged from the machine. He looked over the brink to see Phil standing in the doorway, motioning to him. There was a soft light behind him, and Page thought he saw stairs curving away into the earth. He dropped the acetylene tank and started to run, as Phil moved inside. At that instant it happened.

CHAPTER II

The Sleeper

PHIL turned back with a cry. He was within a few feet of the door when it thundered shut. The grind of machinery had forewarned him. But the door, leaping from a slot in the floor, cut him off short of his goal. For a moment he ran his hands frantically over the wall at each side of the door. Then panic touched him with cold fingers. There was no knob, no button. He was locked in.

A soft light filled the place. Phil pocketed his torch and searched intently for a lock of some sort. He forced himself to think clearly. Somewhere, there had to be a way.

The dome was utterly soundless. Phil's ears ached with listening for Page's voice. He heard nothing, though he pressed his ear against the cold metal.

Suddenly that metal was no longer cold. It was hot—white hot! Phil clapped a hand to his ear and jumped back.

"What the hell!"

A small spot just at the edge of the door glowed with heat. Phil laughed shakily. The acetylene torch! Of course! Page was cutting through to him!

But Page didn't cut through, though he waited an hour. The patch of sizzling heat traced itself all over the door, seeking a softer spot. Finally it ceased. Phil's long jaws showed a line of white skin. The tank was empty. Page had done all he could for him.

Phil Burke did the most serious thinking of his twenty-nine years. A picture popped up in his mind of a skeleton, lying stretched out on the floor with its clawing fingers two inches short of the food and water beyond the wall. Right then he knew he must do something or go mad with terror.

Forcing a pseudo-nonchalance, he shoved his hands in his pockets and looked about his prison.

"Not bad!" The exclamation came involuntarily from his lips after a moment's scrutiny.

Ancient or ultra-modern, the builders of this place had been supreme cratsmen. Though walls, floor, and ceilng were of metal, not a weld showed anywhere. Light came from some indirect source. In the center of the floor, a magnificent staircase of inlaid colored plastics wound down into the heart of the structure.

Phil approached the balustrade and leaned over. He looked far, far down, into blackness. Strips of light at intervals told of other floors. He counted eight. The echoes of his own footfalls followed him chuckingly as he began to descend.

Where the stairway gave its first glimpse of the second floor, as the circular staircase of a lighthouse gives a lofty view of each level, Phil's feet dragged to a stop. The floor spread fifty feet in every direction. Every square foot of it was filled with wonders. Beyond the far walls, through open doors, he glimpsed other galleries.

Phil's first notion was that it was like the toy section of a department store. Showcases were crowded with exquisite minatures. Display tables supported

beautifully arranged exhibits. One section of the floor was laid out like a miniature landing field. A score of small ships were lined up for a take-off.

Reaching the floor, Phil turned to walk up one of the aisles. And all the time his legs carried him slowly along, a strain of logic kept pleading:

"This isn't real! It would have to be a million years old. They don't make things like this anywhere. And the cave-men certainly didn't make them. It isn't real!"

On every side, something rose up to insult his intelligence. Microscopes of unbelievable power! Phil placed an absolutely blank side under a huge, black instrument and recoiled from a vision of something that looked like a dragon.

Metal that defied gravity! Touching a button beside an iron bar, he saw the bar flow upward and come to rest against the ceiling. "Magnetism!" his brain sneered. He released another bar, grabbed it before it could float away, and carried it to the stair-well. There he let it go. It was last seen drifting into the shadows of the dome.

Transmutation of elements! Here was a wheel of ten spokes, at the end of each spoke a sample of some element! Gold, copper, zinc, lead. Where the hub would have been was a chamber containing a little chunk of sulphur. Phil touched a button beside the gold spoke—and unleashed a miracle. The wheel became a blur; when it stopped, a tiny flake of gold lay in the hub . . .

Almost frightened, Phil Burke fled to the stairway and descended to the third level.

SURGERY. Everywhere his eyes rested there were life-sized models of men and women on operating tables. Phil caught an eager breath. Here was his chance to see models of the people who had built this deep well of time!

The most impressive of the displays drew him. Shielded by a great glass bell, four men stood beside a table on which lay a man prepared, apparently for some operation on the heart. The surgeon's heads were covered with glass helmets. Wearing gray, knee-length trousers, their upper bodies were bare, exposing skin of smooth, gold color. In body and feature, they were like present-day men of superior strength and intelligence. As Phil stared, suddenly they began to move.

He didn't ask himself what had started them. He was beyond wondering any longer.

That the surgeons were only clever models was evident by a slight jerkiness of their motions. But man on the table—! Phil's eyes flinched as a scalpel drove through his flesh, and blood spurted. A second surgeon moved forward and deftly clipped the arteries shut. Things happened so fast then that the young National Guardsman completely lost track of his surroundings.

The heart, a pulsing red mass, was taken from the chest cavity and laid on the patient's breast. While swift knives made delicate alterations, Phil held his breath. At length the heart was returned and the surgeons stood back. Then it was that the watcher knew the patient was only a dummy; the sides of the wound drew together, the spilled drops of blood evaporated into the air, and the scene was exactly as it had been before the incision was made.

Phil had had all he wanted of this floor. Through scenes of childbirth, amputation, plastic surgery, limb-grafting, he rushed to the staircase and hurried deeper into the museum.

Each floor he examined brought him a more complete picture of the civilization that was preserved here. They

lived in beautiful, park-like cities. Their buildings were of two or three stories and designed for the utmost comfort. When they traveled, they went by swift ground cars or strato-liners. They farmed scientifically and seemed to have control of the weather. Their factories ran automatically. The extension of knowledge was the supreme thing. Euthanasia was practiced. Stringent eugenics was responsible for the perfection of their bodies. Love and marriage were two things the state didn't attempt to control, but propagation was closely regulated.

A new wonder grew upon Phil as he neared the bottom. What kind of machinery ran the models he put into operation? What controlled the air-conditioning system, which he was certain, by the freshness of the air, must exist? It added up to this: Somewhere in the well of time lay a power plant so frictionless it had run for centuries—milleniums! So devoid of vibration that it could neither be heard nor felt.

Phil Burke reached the bottom level in a mental fog. But no exhibits met his questing gaze. To his right stood massive banks of switchboards and control units. Obviously, this was the heart of the whole plant. To the left, one object alone broke the dustless surface of the floor: A raised platform, suporting—a couch.

Was it fear that made Phil want to run, to get out of this place of mysteries? Terror had its foothold in his heart; but his feet moved him forward almost against his will. He crossed the floor and mounted ten steps to the platform. A score of wires and tubes lay beside the couch, the lower end of each passing through the floor to some room beneath. Phil looked at the impression of a body in the deep-piled blue velvet of the couch. Slowly his fingers went down to touch it.

With a choked curse, he withdrew his hand. The velvet was warm! A living body had lain here only a few moments before!

Then someone laughed.

"Did it burn you? a voice asked.

CHAPTER III

Help from the Past

AGAINST the dark mass of machinery, she stood, tall and dark-haired, the loveliest woman Phil had ever seen. Her gown was of the same blue as the couch. Its cut resembled the graceful Princess pattern of many years ago, emphasizing her high, firm breast. Her face and bosom were a creamy gold, and her eyes, crinkled with amusement, were deep blue. She came across the floor to Phil, and he couldn't move a finger or open his mouth.

"Do I frighten you?" she asked. For the first time, Phil noticed the little carrot-shaped silver instrument she held in her hand, directing it toward him as she spoke. "It is I who should be frightened," she went on. "You are here in your own world, in your own century, and I—"

"Who are you?" the question came out on a long breath from Phil's lungs.

"My name is Avis," the girl told him. "I have lain here longer than I can tell you. The instrument that was to record the centuries as they passed failed to work. Either that, or—it broke when it passed its limit."

Phil's knees began to shake, and he sat down on the couch.

"Centuries—! People don't live that long," he croaked.

"In suspended animation they do. You broke my long sleep when you opened the door. How did you move it?"

"I—I stumbled on the combination,"

Phil faltered. "We were digging and—"

"Digging?"

"Yes, laying mines to stop the Borers. We — Good Lord!" Phil started, as recollection came to him. "I've got to get out of here. Page—my partner—will be scared stiff. After I went in the door closed and we couldn't get it open."

"We will both go out—presently," the girl assured him. "But you don't mind if I take a few moments to orient myself—a few questions to learn what has happened?"

Page shook his head. If the world had been coming to an end, he wouldn't have had the heart to say no. Not while woman's beauty—beauty such as Avis' —could sway him. Phil was looking at her and trying to decide whether or not she was a hallucination. Suddenly he reached out and touched her cheek. The flesh was warm and soft.

At her quizzical glance, he grinned sheepishly:

"Don't mind me! But I thought if I could just be sure you aren't ectoplasm, I could breathe easier. I'm not used to finding beautiful women buried in bronze museums, you see—"

A flush that was far from prehistoric dyed Avis' cheeks. Her glance dropped for a moment; then quickly it came back to him.

"I must find out what time, what—" she groped for the term; "what year, what era, are we living in?" she finished.

"Anno Domini, nineteen-forty-eight," Phil replied. "Nineteen hundred and forty-eight years after the birth of Christ."

"Christ? I don't know of him. Was he a king?"

Bitterness stained Phil's eyes darkly.

"The King of Kings! Not a tyrant like those who helped kill Europe. Not like our own General Aubyn — the usurping martinet!

Troubled lines altered the look about the girl's eyes.

"We have much to speak of, and no common basis of understanding," she frowned. "Let me tell you why this building is here, with all its relics. And then you must tell me all about yourself."

PHIL waited. Avis sat beside him on the couch. She laid aside the silver instrument she held, slipping her fingers about his hand. He knew it to be purely a utilitarian gesture, but the thrill he felt was nonetheless enjoyable. Somehow, the carrot-shaped object translated thought waves into a common language. Apparently, the girl could perform the same trick by direct contact.*

"The time-meter was designed to measure five hundred thousand years," Avis began slowly. "Since it is broken, I cannot tell how long I have slept, until I have time to discover the temperature of the earth and sun. Then I can approximate the interval since Juyo died.

"Juyo was the nation into which all nations were blended, after hundreds of years of wars. If you have seen the miniatures and exhibits in this building, you know more of our civilization than I can tell you. We lived in the Golden Age of Earth. The globe was warm enough from inner fires that we never knew such things as ice and snow. We lived for knowledge and beauty—and—

* Obviously the carrot-shaped instrument is a type of "radio" pickup machine which is capable of picking up the delicate emanations of the electric waves of the mind in the process of thinking. Mental telepathy is deemed a possibility, and ESP experiments have shown that in many persons the ability to detect thought waves is greater than that which can be accredited to chance. Avis, apparently, is able to detect them by means of some mental power which is fully developed, and which she can transmit to another by means of contact. This incidates that the nerves act in some way as a conductor of waves from the brain.—Ed.

love. We could control every phase of our environment. We were absolute masters of our fate. Odd to think that so small a thing as a cloud should destroy Juyo!

"Yet destroy it, it did, and in the space of three years! A fragment of a dark nebula drifted into the Solar System and cut off ninety percent of our light and heat. Earth cooled rapidly. Millions of souls died from disease and cold. We waited, hoping the cloud would pass. Two years went by, and it did not. The oceans froze. All plant life was killed. For a depth of two miles, Earth froze as hard as steel.

"So one day we knew we must perish. Yet we didn't want to die without leaving our treasures for the men who would some day walk again on our world. Into a hundred museums such as this one, our knowledge was gathered. For each thesaurus a keeper was selected. It was made difficult for future men to enter the repositories, in the hope that they would be safe during the states of barbarism through which men must climb again. We wanted to help men only when they were ready for it."

"Your museum was opened too soon!" Phil broke in bitterly. "Mankind is still in a state of barbarism. We need your help—God knows!—but no world was ever less deserving of it."

Avis' dark eyes searched his face. Phil's head shook.

"The gods are against you, Avis. You left Earth in one set of death throes and you've found it in another. It was a cloud of gas that destroyed Juyo. It's a cloud of steel-jawed worms from the moon that is stopping us. They lay dormant among the lunar craters for centuries. Something—hunger, maybe—aroused them to migrate to Earth. They could have been stopped when they were small, winged cocoons. But they grew. And now they threaten to destroy civilization. It didn't have to happen—but it's happening! Thanks to a plague worse than the worms—dictators!"

"DICTATORS? What are they?"

"Human devils who set themselves up as gods," ground out Phil Burke. "The trend started in Europe, where three ruthless murderers seized control of their governments and finally forced their doctrines on all the countries of that part of the world. Within the last few years they've succeeded in infecting a large part of our nation with their ideas. When the Borers came, it gave the Fifth Columnists, as we call their spies, a chance to seize control of the government. And they've done it, damn them! President Adams left a clear road when he died for General Aubyn and his crowd to declare martial law and take over."

"What has happened in Europe?" Avis asked.

Phil said bitterly: "Europe no longer exists. The dictators refused to cooperate with each other when the invasion came. They made it easy for the Borers to conquer. The same thing is happening in America now. General Aubyn has his own pet plans and won't listen to advice from the greatest military experts in the country. Every day a dozen more cities fall, but he keeps on with his bullheaded course."

"These Borers—" Avis' eyes clouded as he finished speaking. "Are they strong enough to break through metal such as this?" She indicated the walls of the museum.

"Not a chance," Phil grunted. "Even their teeth can't scratch the stuff."

Avis was suddenly smiling.

"Then it will be easy! We can manufacture enough *bronzite* to surround a great city with walls a hundred feet

high and equally deep. Gather everything possible into this city and wait until the Borers turn upon themselves. In a year's time, I promise you there will not be one of the monsters left!"

Phil's eyes lighted like stirred coals.

"Could we do that? Make the metal in such quantities?"

"For a single city, yes. The wall need only be the thickness of paper. But it would be possible to save only a fraction of your population. Still, it is that or complete extinction of the race."

"Of course!" Phil nodded, excitement growing swiftly in him. "An idiot could see that we're heading for doom this way. Isolation is the only way of fighting the plague. Avis—!" He suddenly gripped her fingers tightly. "You'll come with me—talk to Aubyn and his ministers?"

"I've waited a thousand lifetimes to help you," the girl smiled. And Phil, watching the quiet curve of those rich lips, read much into the simple words.

With a start, he stood up, shot a glance at his wrist watch.

"Lord! Page has been waiting four hours! We've got to get out there before he has the whole National Guard hammering at the door."

AVIS started down the steps with Phil impatiently accompanying her. They hurried to the stairwell and mounted the numberless steps to the dome. Nearing the top, the girl turned to him.

"I will stay here while you bring your General Aubyn," she stated. "There are many things to be done before I leave."

"But if he won't come—?"

Avis handed him the telepathy inductor.

"Present him with this," she said. "He will come."

Phil took it, puzzled. Forestalling further questions, Avis raised her hand and moved it back and forth through the air above the door. Immediately, there was the same grind of machinery, and the door opened.

Phil's eyes had been prepared for the glare of sunlight, but only the dim rays of late twilight reached through the door. While he stood on the threshold, excited voices broke out and someone darted to his side. Page Russell looked as though he had not slept for a week, as he grabbed Phil by the arm. Worry had cut deeply about his eyes.

"Phil—!" he gasped. "In God's name, where—" Then his tongue froze, and he gaped at the girl standing back a few feet. "Who—who's that?" he croaked.

Out of the shadows beyond the door, many men moved to stare. Phil saw a dozen of his fellow Guardsmen in the crowd. Some carried portable torches, others clung to crowbars and pick-axes. When he spoke, it was to the whole group.

"This is Avis," he said quietly. "I'll leave it to her to explain just who she is and why she is here. But I'll tell you this much myself: She's offered the first sensible plan for fighting the Borers that I've heard yet, and it's going to be listened to if I have to drag General Aubyn out here by the ears!"

Page hissed: "You're talking yourself into trouble! Watch yourself!"

Phil shook his head.

"Even old Lantern-Jaw will have to see the light when he listens to her. She —she's wonderful, Page . . ."

Page grinned, eyeing the girl admiringly.

"Uh-huh. Four hours alone with her and I'd have the same glitter in my eye that you've got."

Phil reddened, then put a frown on his face.

"Let's get back to the city before Aubyn takes off on one of his daring flights over the enemies' ranks. He's going to listen to what Avis has to say. Take my word for it, mister, we've wasted our last day digging gopher holes!"

IN a borrowed Army pursuit ship, Phil shot back to the City. Lights frosted the island when he levelled off above it. Before City Hall, crowds jammed the street. Phil's guess was that Aubyn was speaking to the nation again by means of radio and loudspeaker. Dropping fast, he coasted to a stop on the landing roof atop the building.

With the roar of the engine still ringing in his ears, he heard the boom of amplifiers many stories below. He ran to the elevator-housing, listening with half of his attention to the General's spirited harangue.

"—not the first time this nation has faced ruin!" Aubyn bellowed. "But it is by far the most perilous situation that has ever confronted America. Under the old order, defeat would be a certainty. With every department of the government under my leadership, I will guide America back to safety. Give me one week and—"

The elevator door cut off his words. Phil let the car drop. He bounced to a halt on the ministry floor and hurried up the hall. Aubyn's voice came to him again. This time it pounded through the glass door of the council room from which he was broadcasting.

Two Gold Troopers, on guard before the door, presented crossed rifles. Phil offered his credentials.

"Captain Burke, with an important message for General Aubyn," he clipped.

The Gold Troopers, stiff and important in their high-collared tunics and tight fitting breeches, continued to bar his way.

"The General won't be free for an hour," one of them grunted. "You can talk to Colonel Sudermann."

"Sudermann won't do. Tell the General I've got information regarding a plan that will absolutely stop the Borers in two weeks!"

The same swarthy Gold Trooper raised an eyebrow.

"I don't think he'd be interested, Captain. He's just told the nation he'll stop the Borers in a week."

Phil arrested an angry contradiction.

"Do you have any objection to my waiting inside?" he asked, through set teeth.

"I suppose not," the Gold Trooper shrugged. "Take a seat and keep still."

Phil went inside, breasting a gale of vociferous promises and threats as he entered. General Aubyn sat at the head of a long table, a microphone before him. Around the table were ringed his war ministers: Colonel Sudermann, Major Henry, Major Westfall and four others. Phil took a seat against the wall and waited.

With clenched fists and bared teeth, Aubyn continued to harangue the listening millions for three quarters of an hour. He was a burly, deep-chested man of fifty, arrogant in his new power. His hair was thick and gray, his cheeks veined with tiny purple threads.

Sudermann, propaganda minister, kept a thoughtful frown on his face and made meaningless notes throughout the oration. Westfall stared straight ahead of him with hard, lustrous black eyes. Major Henry murmured from time to time.

"Excellent! Well put!"

Watching them, Phil's being crawled with contempt.

AT last it was over. General Aubyn fell exhausted against the back of

his chair, smiling slightly at his ministers' comments. Then his eyes fell on Phil Burke, standing tall and stiff before him.

"What is it, Captain?"

"General, you've got to come up to the Catskills with me!" Phil blurted. "I've found something there that will change the whole tide of the war. We can stop the Borers dead if we act soon enough. Will you come with me immediately?"

Aubyn's waspish temper flared. He flung a look about him.

"Who let this wild-eyed young fool in?" he demanded. "Do I have to be plagued with cranks every hour of the day? Throw him out!"

Sudermann hammered on the table. One of the Gold Troopers opened the door and glanced in.

"Get rid of this fellow!" the Colonel bawled. "Someone will pay for this interruption!"

"Give me a chance, will you?" Phil cried. "This is no joke. You know as well as I do that you have no working plan of battle. If you'll listen to me, we can at least save a fragment of our civilization."

Aubyn suddenly had a gun in his hand. He motioned the Gold Troopers aside.

"Stand back. I claim the privilege of executing this traitor with my own hands."

Phil had a sickening instant of staring down a black gun-muzzle. Then his fingers encountered the slick feel of the silver telepathy inductor in his pocket. He held it before him. Aubyn's eyes reflected the sparkle of the gleaming metal. Just for a second his finger slowed on the trigger. Phil started toward him.

"You want proof that I'm not lying," he offered. "Examine this, and tell us what you think."

Aubyn took the inductor on his broad, flat palm. He held it close to his eyes. All at once he started, turning to look behind him.

"Who said that?" he snapped.

"I heard nothing," Sudermann frowned.

"Are you deaf?" General Aubyn snarled. "Listen!" His lips began to move, whispering words that none of the rest could hear. " 'A million years I have waited to help you. Will you deny me the right now? It is a small thing I ask of you. Come with this man where he will take you.' "

"There! You hear that?" Aubyn challenged Sudermann.

"I — no, General!" the Colonel squirmed.

"You, Westfall? You, Henry?"

The ministers' eyes fell before his. Aubyn angrily shoved the object in his pocket.

"You think I'm crazy, eh? Well, I'll show you how crazy I am by going with Burke to see just what the hell's up! And you're going with me, gentlemen."

The ministers rose in a body to protest. But the General was curious enough, or frightened enough, to be adamant.

"We'll take a bomber—tonight. If it's a trick, I'll soon know it. Captain, lead the way."

TRIUMPH was not Phil's sole emotion during the return flight. Anxiety was another. Would Aubyn have the perception to see the wisdom of Avis' plan? And would he admit it if he did? Vanity was the food Aubyn battened on. To give credit to another meant a loss of prestige.

Phil pointed down into the forest, and the pilot snapped on brilliant landing beams. Soon the light found the deep hole, and at the bottom of it, a campfire showed where Page and the rest of the

Guardsmen waited. They landed in a nearby meadow and hurried toward the spot. Page was the first to greet them when they arrived. Aside, he whispered to Phil:

"Watch them! The girl showed us through the whole place. I don't like the way the others took it. They've got the notion it's some scheme of the reactionaries to get back in power."

"If we can just make Aubyn believe —" Phil grunted.

It was a stiff, awkward affair, that meeting between Avis and the dictator. The girl was gracious, General Aubyn glowering and suspicious.

"Let's see this fun house or whatever you call it," he snorted. "I warn you— I want proof, not parlor magic."

In the few hours since Phil had left the girl, she had gone a long way toward mastering their language. He did not wonder that she had been one of those chosen for the museums. Her answer to the general was only slightly halting.

"I accept your challenge, General Aubyn. Please come in."

The trip through the eight floors of the museum was an ordeal that left Phil shaking with repressed fury. The conceit of America's leader was so enormous that he blinded himself to everything he saw. That all the miracles could fail to impress him was impossible. Yet he buried his wonder beneath a hard shell of distrust. His attitude was a pattern for the rest. As she completed the demonstration of a weather-control model, she turned to Aubyn.

"Have I convinced—?" she began; and then she saw the guns in the hands of the leaders. Aubyn had not come here without a typical motive. Phil realized at the same instant what had happened. He groped for his own pistol and found it had been quietly removed.

Hot blood raced to his brain.

"You blind fools!" he raged. "After all you've seen—"

"I'll tell you what I've seen!" Aubyn barked. "A stupid attempt to hoodwink me. How long have you been working on this elaborate lie, you and your reactionist friends, Burke? Years, probably. Holding it against the time of need . . ."

Avis spoke softly, and Phil thrilled to the quiet courage she showed.

"What do you intend to do, General?"

"Execute the three of you as spies! What else can I do? The people have trusted me to protect them against all their enemies, and I number you among the most dangerous ones."

"Would you believe me, General, if I told you you are standing on the very brink of hell at this instant?"

A look of dumb shock claimed Aubyn's features. Then he snarled:

"To hell with that! Take them, men . . ."

AVIS' hand lay on the edge of a table. Her fingers stirred. Down from the ceiling writhed a column of blue flame that filled the room with a crackling hiss. Aubyn and his ministers stood enveloped in that sheet of fire!

The dictator's hysterical scream came from out of the midst of it.

"My God, she's killed us—!"

"Not yet, General!" Avis cried. "But unless you throw down your guns I'll put teeth in that harmless bolt of power. You'll burn like strips of bacon in a furnace. Are you ready to cooperate?"

Phil grinned and looked down at where Avis fingered a set of rheostats. It was not accident that they had finished the tour on this spot!

Sudermann's gun was the first to come skittering across the floor toward them. Phil captured it. He could see Aubyn's features, muscles working beneath the taut flesh. Then the dicta-

tor flung his gun down and Westfall, Henry, and the rest followed suit.

"Now you'll listen to somebody else for a change!" Phil flung at him. "Behave yourselves or I'll turn that dial myself!"

"What's your plan?" Aubyn panted. His fingers clung clawlike against his thighs. His face was like dough.

"You know the uselessness of ordinary weapons against the Borers," Avis declared. "Trying to hold them back is racial suicide. The only salvation for America is in impregnable fortresses."

"What's impregnable against the Borers?" Sudermann growled.

"*Bronzite*. The metal of which this repository is made. I can show you how to make it. In a few weeks' time we can manufacture enough to construct a walled city. Perhaps two or three cities. We will continue to build them as long as we are able. Into these cities we will gather the best of your civilization. Huge storehouses of food will guarantee that they do not starve. In the space of a year, the Borers are certain to have exhausted all the food on the globe. Then they will turn on themselves and start the job of self-destruction that we will finish."

"How many people can we save?" demanded Aubyn.

"Perhaps two million in each city."

"Two million! What's to become of the rest?"

"They must die, as you will all die unless you do as I say. Is it to be total destruction, or partial destruction and a chance to rebuild?"

"How do we go about starting?" Aubyn's manner was that of stalling for more time.

"Probably with a selective draft. It must not be given out that the persons called are the only ones who will be saved. There would be revolution overnight. Let them think they are to form a new army unit. Withdraw them to some point far from the present activity of the Borers."

There was silence for a few seconds, with only the crackliing of the flame to offset it. Phil grated impatiently:

"Well, how about it?"

"Will I put the plan in motion?" Aubyn let his eyes go from Phil to Avis and back again. "No; I will not. In my opinion it's a scheme to save yourselves at the cost of millions of other lives. My methods may be primitive, but at least they aim at saving every soul we possibly can. Women and children! Are you asking me to turn them over to the Borers to protect myself and you? The answer is—to hell with you!"

CHAPTER IV

Tunnels

WHETHER or not Aubyn was sincere, Phil Burke could not tell. The dictator stood with chin lifted and eyes blazing, a resolute, self-sacrificing figure. Ready to die for his country; a martyr to his principles. The whole thing didn't jibe with the rest of his character.

"You're asking us to put you to death, you know that?" the Guardsman breathed.

"I realize it," Aubyn said in a monotone. Then his eyes glinted, and his egotism boiled to the surface again. "Here's something else I realize. You don't stand a chance in a million of getting your message to the people without my help. You don't dare broadcast it to the whole nation. That would defeat your purpose. You can go to Science Congress, and who will believe you? A couple of shavetail Guardsmen and a woman who claims to be a million years old!"

"You're nine-tenths right," Phil came back. "But you forget one factor. If we've already lost, we may as well kill you and have the satisfaction of doing it!"

"I didn't say you'd lost," the general argued. "But first I intend to put my own methods to the test. I'll make a bargain with you. If I haven't got the Borers on the run in ten days, I'll do whatever you ask."

"By that time it may be too late!" Phil objected. "The Borers already have control of all the cities west of the Mississippi. They've been fairly quiet in the South and East, but how do we know they aren't advancing underground?"

"Captain, we don't." Aubyn was once more expanding into his normal bluff manner, as he gained control of the situation. "But I'm gambling that they aren't and I think I'll win. You can play it my way and hope for the best. Or you can execute me and condemn millions of people with the same bolt that kills me. It's your choice, this time."

Rage shook Phil, and Russell seemed on the point of diving for the switch himself. But it was Avis who placed her hand over the rheostat and shook her head.

"He's right," she murmured. "We can only deal through him." She turned the power off and the tongue of fire withdrew into the ceiling.

Aubyn wiped sweat from his flat jaws.

"A wise decision, young woman. I believe you'll thank me, ten days from now, for preventing a tragic mistake." He signed to Sudermann and the rest to leave. Then he caught Phil's gaze. "Coming along, Captain? And you, Sergeant? I wouldn't want to court-martial you for desertion."

"You won't have to," Phil snapped. "We'll be right there watching your progress those ten days."

Page frowned a warning at him, sensing Aubyn's purpose in inviting them out of the museum. Avis stilled his fears with a shake of her head.

"I'm sure you'll deal fairly with my friends, General Aubyn," she smiled. "There are a few things I neglected to show you in the galleries. One was a very unpleasant gas-bomb. It probably would not affect the Borers, but I'm sure it could destroy most of the population of New York. Including the dictators."

Aubyn's eyes went a little wide, and his jaw got a soft look. Then he brought a smile to his lips.

"You may consider them my guests," he said ironically. "Good night."

Avis accompanied them to the stairs. They had not ascended past the fourth level when the pilot of the bomber came down the steps at a dead run. He stopped when he saw Aubyn.

"General! The Borers!" he gasped. "I got it over the radio. They've taken Philadelphia and Albany. They're on the way to the capital now!"

AUBYN cursed. Then his thick legs were pumping him up the stairs. The rest of the group gained the dome just behind him and plunged into the night. A gang of Guardsmen crowded the door of the bomber. Aubyn knocked them aside and stood panting before the ship's radio. Phil stopped outside the plane and listened.

"This is Thomas Kerry, speaking from Buffalo," the commentator's voice came. "We are in an NBC news-plane flying low over the city. It is difficult to see anything below us, as the power lines have all been destroyed. Buffalo is in total darkness. But there is sufficient moonlight that we can see waves of Borers sweeping across the city. Most of the tall buildings have fallen. The streets are jammed with wreckage. The

army is endeavoring to maintain an orderly exodus, but there is little hope of this, as most of the roads are blocked by hordes of Borers. The report is that they entered through the sewers.

"Word comes that Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Boston are also falling. As you can see on a map, this forms a wide arc about the city of New York. The Borers, moving with some sort of plan, are rapidly closing in on the new capital. Other swarms of them have broken from the earth in less populated sections of Pennsylvania and New York state. . . ."

Aubyn snapped the instrument off. He slammed the pilot into the seat.

"Get this damned thing off the ground!" he roared. To Phil and the rest of the Guardsmen, he shouted: "Inside. Every man able to fly a plane is going to meet those stinking brutes."

Avis clutched Phil's arm as he moved to enter the bomber.

Come back for me!" she whispered. "I'm going along. Maybe the sight of them will suggest something."

Phil nodded.

"Stay with her," he told Page. Then he climbed into the plane and found a seat. Aubyn crouched over the transmitter the long fifteen minutes it took to return. Into every department of the army, his voice found its way. Just as they reached the edge of the city, the first swarm of planes rose into the stratosphere and roared west and north. Phil saw the knot of officers waiting on the landing dock as they dropped from the clouds above City Hall. They hurried to confer with Aubyn as the bomber made its landing.

Phil joined the group in the elevator hurrying to the nearest landing field. Trucks waiting in the street rushed them away. There were planes by the hundreds in the hangars. Aircraft preparedness was one of the late President's chief dicta, and New York was blessing him for it now.

Phil was assigned a tiny scout-interceptor. The ship was fifty percent engine and forty-five percent machine guns and small cannon. The rest was abortive tail and wings. At the dispatcher's signal, he inched back the accelerator. The interceptor roared down the runway. A flip of the elevators and it was howling straight into the sky.

WHEN he leveled off, the redness of dawn burned along the stubby wings. He had climbed to daylight, though New York lay yet in gray half-light. Biting savagely, the propeller hurled the scout along at four hundred miles an hour. Phil was circling for a landing in ten minutes. Pre-dawn illumination made landing risky but no snags found the rolling wheels as he set it down.

From the edge of the field, Avis and Page hurried. The girl had changed to light, almost filmy garments. Impulsively, she seized Phil's hand as he moved to help her. And this time there was no pretense of telepathy to lessen the Guardsman's returning squeeze.

They crowded into the tiny cabin. Page draped himself around the rear gun. Avis was just behind Phil's shoulder when the interceptor took the air. Phil's orders were to proceed in the general direction of Syracuse. That way they shot at full throttle.

The sun raised its scarlet rind above the Atlantic. Gray waters shifted to a moving tide of gold and crimson. Beneath the ship, trees and meadows seized the same wealth of color. Then, in the near distance, a dull line of gray-white loomed. Phil pointed.

"Put the glasses on that!"

Page unkinked his long legs and crawled forward. Through a pair of

binoculars, he scanned the horizon. He was silent; then:

"My God! What a sight! The Borers—"

Phil took the glasses with one hand. What he saw bunched the muscles of his body into knots. Worms! Maggots! A crawling ocean of them!

He had seen enough. The glasses came down and the interceptor went into a long slope. Now, above the wriggling gray mass, other ships could be seen diving and turning. Here and there, geysers of torn protoplasm showed where bombs had landed.

From maggots, the Borers swelled to the size of giant anacondas. Phil had the ship rocketing along just over the wave of monstrous caterpillars. They could see trees and shrubs falling before them. Their hard green faces glistened as they crested low hummocks. North and west, as far as eye could reach, the Borers covered the ground. Climbing higher, Phil looked down on a ragged lump upon the earth's surface, miles wide. Broken concrete spires and steel skeletons lifted gaunt above the moving mass.

Phil grunted:

"Syracuse."

Page stifled a curse and crawled back to the gun.

"Put her about," he gritted. "Let's give them hell!"

PHIL turned the ship and they flew back. As they won the front line again, he swung at right angles to the advance and they began a strafing attack up and down. Their explosive shells cut the crawling Borers to pieces. The second line piled into the dying first line; then they swarmed over and crawled ahead unimpeded. Phil flew still lower, kept both his guns chattering while Page rocked the other machine gun back and forth.

Other ships dived and strafed a mile away. Their success was no greater than Phil Burke's. They could slow the Borers, but they could not stop them. No power on Earth could do that.

Phil wanted desperately to believe the mines they had laid far to the south would stop them. But logic told him how vain that hope was. Earth's disease was in its terminal stages, beyond the help of any medicine. They were seeing the end of civilization.

At his elbow, Avis breathed:

"It's hopeless, Phil. Aubyn has condemned New York by his blindness. The rest of the world, as well. It may be too late now to manufacture sufficient *bronzite* for a small city, even if he would agree."

"But—there has to be another way! If we can't arrest them here, they'll go on to destroy everything, every shred of life in the country. Isn't there—some way. . . ?"

"There is one possibility, Phil," Avis said soberly. "I hadn't mentioned it before, because it's small comfort at the most. You've only seen a fraction of the building in which you found me. Beneath the eighth level are living quarters for perhaps five thousand persons. The swiftness of the ice plague kept us from ever filling those rooms. A small colony, indeed, to give civilization a new start! Still, a start—if only we could get in touch with the type of men and women we need."

Page had started up at her first words. Now he sank back.

"That's it," he muttered. "It's no use picking out five thousands individuals at random. We'd be giving mankind a dowry of disease, idiocy, and laziness. God knows how we can contact a better class."

Phil's fingers were white on the controls.

"There's just one man who could help us," he murmured. "The kingpin of them all—General Aubyn. And I've got a feeling he'll be glad to help us—"

"Aubyn—!" You aren't serious, Phil—?" Avis' blue eyes were big.

"Absolutely. He'll be practically unguarded, with even the Gold Troopers in the field. If we can get next to him, make him call the head of Science Congress and round up the foremost men of science in New York—"

"That's it!" Page yelled. "Give her the gun, mister. The big shot's going to talk turkey for once!"

CHAPTER VI

Hegira——

FROM the council room on the seventieth floor of City Hall, it was Aubyn's custom to keep in touch with his leaders by radio, during crises. Phil Burke knew this, and he had banked heavily on it in heading there. The landing dock was empty, and they reached the elevator unseen. Under his arm Page carried one of the machine guns, dismounted and ready for work.

The elevator door slid back on the seventieth level. Down the corridor, a pair of Gold Troopers stood guard before the council room. At the sound of the door, they looked up.

Phil hissed:

"Ready with that gun! We'll try to act like it's official business or something—"

Avis went between them. The guards watched them narrowly, puzzled. When they were within twenty feet, the blue-jowled Trooper on the left barked:

"Hold it! What's the idea of the artillery?"

Page raised the heavy caliber gun on a line with the sentries.

"Don't get excited, boys. This is where you lie down and play dead dog. We don't want trouble, but—"

"Get him!" the Gold Trooper roared. His rifle swung up, blasted flame and lead down the hall.

HOT wind stung Phil's cheek. Then the corridor rocked with the hammering thunder of the machine gun. Page fired two short bursts. There were the added explosions of the shells detonating in the Trooper's bodies. The guards' rifles clattered on the floor and they went back against the wall, to slide loosely to the polished marble.

Phil sprang past them, flung the door open. He had a glimpse of Aubyn rising from his chair with sagging features, Sudermann and the others watching from their posts at the table. Page stuck the ugly, smoking snout of the gun into the room.

"Lift 'em high," Phil snapped. "We've got plans that include murder, if it's necessary."

Aubyn stood there with his hands slowly lifting. The table before him was littered with maps and diagrams. His blunted features worked.

"I thought we'd had this out before," he said slowly.

"I guess we couldn't quite get used to your decision," Phil returned. "We're making some changes. Sudermann, you and the rest will go with Russell. One of the basement rooms should do, Page. We'll meet you there later."

The Guardsman nodded.

"Lay your guns on the table, all of you," he directed. Phil gathered up the weapons as they appeared. He threw them all in a closet. As an afterthought, he said:

"Better have them carry those Troopers along. They're liable to spoil things, lying there in plain sight."

When they had left, he grinned at the general over his guns.

"Get Arthur Volney on your private line," he ordered.

"Volney—! What do you want with him?"

"He's head of Science Congress, isn't he? All right. Here's what you do. Tell him to come up here immedaitely. I'll be in the closet when he comes, so you might as well get used to the idea of following my directions. Have Volney round up all the leading scientists in the city, their families as well. Also, he's to get about a hundred capable physicians and surgeons together. Have him gather all the professors from the colleges, too. He's to take all these men—along with their families, understand—down to the docks and put them on a couple of ships. Give him complete directions for reaching the museum in the Catskills. Oh, yes. Give him *carte blanche* to the army commissary to take out enough food for five thousand people for a year. Have the soldiers take care of the loading for him. Got all that, now?"

Aubyn's head shoved forward on its thick neck.

"You're out of your mind!"

"Not entirely. Just crazy enough to think we can save part of the civilization you doomed by your bullheadedness. One other thing. Tell Volney he's to take care of all that in six hours, if possible. It won't be much longer than that before the Borers reach the Catskills. Now get on that phone. . . ."

AUBYN obeyed the menace of the weaving pistols. He called Arthur Volney at Science Congresss, where he was up to the neck in plans for new explosives. Volney unwillingly agreed to come. Phil and Avis got into the closet when his footfalls were heard in the hall. Through the aperture left by the unclosed door, Phil could see him enter.

"Yes, General?" He stood before Aubyn, a surly, almost rebellious figure.

"I've decided to entrust you with an important mission, Volney," Aubyn began. "The most important thing you've ever attempted. We're setting up a new post which will be our last bulwark against the Borers. The fort will be located in the Catskills, near the river. Here's a map showing you how to get there. Now, here's what I want you to do—"

He tolled off the points Phil had mentioned. There was a hopeful ring to his voice as he concluded.

"You think you can—er—take care of this in eight or ten hours?"

Arthur Volney showed his excitement by his nervous folding and unfolding of the map.

"Easily, sir! I'll put my whole staff on the job and have it done in three or four hours. If you don't mind my saying so—it's about time some safeguard of this nature was taken!"

"Thanks," the general grunted. "Now get the devil out of here."

Volney bowed and left.

Phil gave him a few minutes to leave the building. Then they marshalled Aubyn down the corridor to the elevators. The lift dropped them to the basement, where they walked slowly along the dark, musty tunnels until a door opened at their advance. Phil saw Page Russell beckoning them. Hurriedly they entered the room.

The cabinet made a sullen, miserable group where they sat on boxes near a boiler. Page sat down with his machine gun.

"Get Volney?" he asked.

"He's our man!" Phil exulted. "Thinks he can have the ships on the move in less than four hours."

"Good! Four more hours is about all I can stand of looking at these sniveling heel-clickers."

"You'll have to look at them longer than that," Phil told him. "We'll take no chance of having them send out bombers to stop the ships. Yet we'd take that risk if we left them before Volney's had a chance to make it to the museum. We'll stay with them for six hours and give him plenty of time."

Page made disgusted noises in his throat and settled down to wait.

DURING those six hours Aubyn went from cajolery to threats and back again. The rest of the ministry relapsed into a lowering silence. But the dictator could not keep still. He was on his feet every minute, as nervous as a cat. And when Phil at last stood up and looked at his wrist watch, he started toward him with one hand clenched.

"You'll never make it without my help," he snarled. "Come to your senses. Cut us in on it and we'll rule this new world you talk of together."

"You misunderstand our motives," General," Avis said sweetly. "The idea of a selective draft was to cut out men like you."

Phil chuckled and glanced at Page.

"Got the key to this door? All we want is a ten minute headstart and we're set."

Page tossed it to him. Carefully, then, backing every step of the way, they moved to the door. They were on the point of backing into the hall when Avis uttered a choked little cry.

"Phil! Behind you—!"

Phil turned, a second late. From the shadows lunged a dozen Gold Troopers. Rifles probed his stomach and a walnut stock crashed down on his shoulder. He went to his knees as the soldiers plowed Page down and disarmed him.

Aubyn was bellowing.

"That's the stuff, men! How the hell did you find us?"

Fear worked in the face of the Gold Troop Captain who answered him.

"No one saw you leave so we knew you were in the building. We've searched every floor down to here. But, my God, sir, I'm afraid it's too late! The Borers are in the city! The subways—"

Aubyn seized the fellow by the arm.

"In—the city—?" he croaked.

"Yes, sir! They're everywhere. Empire State's down and half the city's on fire. How are we going to evacuate, with the subways blocked and the docks cut off?"

Phil, dazed with pain, saw the swift look of craft that shot through Aubyn's face.

"Evacuate?" he heard him cry. "Do I look like a coward to you, Captain? We'll arm every man and woman in the city and fight to the last ditch. Go tell them that. Have them open the arsenal and start doling out guns."

The Gold Trooper saluted.

"I knew you'd say that, sir!" he grinned. "But—these people—you'll want them executed first?"

"No, Captain. I'll take care of them myself. Oh, yes; another thing. Is my plane on the landing dock?"

The Trooper nodded.

"Ready, fueled, and the bomb racks filled, General."

"Excellent. I'm going to see if I can bomb a path to the ships, myself. If all else fails, we'll try to get the people into ships somehow."

The Troopers saluted and left. As the sound of their running feet died, a slow smile buckled Aubyn's wide lips.

"Now, then. I suppose the museum is locked?"

Phil laughed harshly.

"Knew there was something wrong!" he mocked. "So you're going to fight to the last ditch, eh? And the last

ditch for you is the museum. To hell with the people, eh, General?"

Aubyn's eyes blazed.

"Later on there'll be time to teach you respect. For the time being I may need you. Out that door now, all of you. Make a suspicious move and you'll died in your tracks."

PHIL took Avis' hand as they left the room. She smiled up at him, a smile to which fear had no claim. Reaching the roof, Aubyn rushed them into the giant bomber in which they had flown in to the Catskills the time before. The dictator himself took the pilot's place and started the motors. Before the sputtering roar broke out, they heard other ominous sounds.

Women's screams, and the shriller cries of children; the dull kettle-drumming of falling masonry, the rattle of guns and expansive roars of grenades; and over it all the clash-clashing of the Borers' hungry jaws.

Then Aubyn had lifted the craft into the air. They sped up-river, closing their eyes to the horror below. Nearing the museum, they saw another sight to terrify them.

The Borers had crossed the river several miles above the bronze shell and were sweeping cross-country on a tangent that would carry them across it. About an equal distance from the museum was a dark mass of running, walking, crawling humanity. It was not the danger to the scientists that started Aubyn cursing. It was the possibility that they themselves would not make it to the repository from the meadow.

With his frightened hands on the controls, the ship almost ended things for them in the meadow's deep grass. Striking a rock, it bounded twenty feet into the air and came down in a grinding skid. The ship's dozen passengers landed in a heap against the dashboard. Phil's one thought was for the bombs in the racks—but they failed to detonate. Aubyn shook himself and barked orders. The men crawled out of the wrecked ship.

Aubyn tore open a locker and began passing out small crates of hand grenades.

"We may need these to hold them off!" he shouted. "It's going to be a dead heat if we make it."

Even Phil and Page were made to lug boxes. It was man-killing work, that uphill struggle through the rocks to the museum. They reached the hummock above the great pit that hid the shell, and the men in the lead let out a cry.

"We're too late! They're a hundred feet from the pit!"

"Too late, hell!" bawled General Aubyn. "Start heaving those grenades. Keep them in the air as you run. We'll blast 'em out until we can get inside."

The leader allowed his prisoners to hurl grenades along with the rest, knowing they could not harm him without killing themselves. In the late dusk, the red flashes broke out blindingly among the mass of Borers wriggling down the walls of the pit. Heads, fragments of bodies, and loose earth flew hundreds of feet through the trees. The worms were legion, but for a moment they were hurled back from the museum.

They broke into a dead run, after that. Phil glanced off through the trees and saw the flash of moving bodies. Volney and his strange collection of humanity were not far off. Now Aubyn was plunging down the sloping dirt incline. He gained the bottom and began shouting to Avis.

"Get this door open! We can't hold them off much longer!"

The girl turned to Phil.

"What shall I do? He'll only save himself and kill the rest of us."

Phil grinned, a wild, mirthless grin.

"Pretend to open it. Stall along, I'll do the rest."

AVIS left his side to run to the combination box. After she had toyed with the dials a moment, she said something to Aubyn. The dictator cursed.

"Keep at it!" he panted. "We'll hold them off."

He ran to where the others had formed a short line twenty-five feet from the door. Up and down their arms flailed, in that queer, overhand grenade throw. The tide of Borers was on the lip of the crater. Up there, the ground boiled and smoked, churned to life by constant explosions. Now and then a wriggling monster would come rolling down the hill, to start its blind rush after its tormentors. Then one of the men would pump bullet after bullet into its head until nothing was left of it.

But the minutes inched by. The Borers were piling up. A dozen of them at a time would roll down the hill. It was no longer possible to keep up with the massacring of those that gained the bottom. Aubyn turned desperately.

"Will you hurry!" he shouted. "We can't—" Then he saw them; the men led by Arthur Volney.

At a stumbling run, they poured down the incline. Avis had opened the door and the first of them were entering the museum. Aubyn said not a word. He jerked the pin from a grenade and his arm went to throw it into the mass of men, women and children.

Phil was on him like a mastiff. His knuckles landed on the general's jaw. Aubyn reeled, sat down. Still he clutched the grenade. Phil dived on him. He tore the bomb from his fingers and threw it. The Guardsman chopped another fist into his face and Aubyn's jaw went slack and he fell back.

Phil jumped up and shot a measuring glance up the slope. The Borers seemed poised like a breaking comber. He began to throw again. The rest of the men had not seen the by-play. Their bombs still fell among the monsters.

Phil's shoulder muscles burned. The pain seemed to steal into his brain. He lost track of everything but the need to keep on fighting. He was still hurling grenades when Page grabbed his arm.

"Come on!" he cried. "They're all inside. We're ready to close up. . . ."

"To close up." Words Phil had thought never to hear. He stumbled along at Page's side until the dome loomed above him.

He looked back to see the dictator struggling to his feet. Aubyn shrieked and flung up an imploring hand. It was in Phil's heart to show him the pity he didn't deserve. But at that moment the ground between them split open and an ugly green head, the size of a washtub, burst from the earth. Aubyn screamed and turned to run. But behind him were thousands of other Borers. Phil turned away.

The coolness of the metal structure was about him, then, and the door thundered shut.

"It's over, Phil!" Avis whispered. "There's death outside, but in here there's life. And hope for your people to rebuild their world again."

Phil went toward her, until he was standing tall above her, his hands on her waist.

"Our people," he corrected. "This is the Ark of covenant, and it's going to be guided by you. You'll bring us back to a saner world than we ever knew. A world in which dictators are classed lower than the Borers."

"How can I fail?" Avis smiled. "With everything to work for—and you to help me!"

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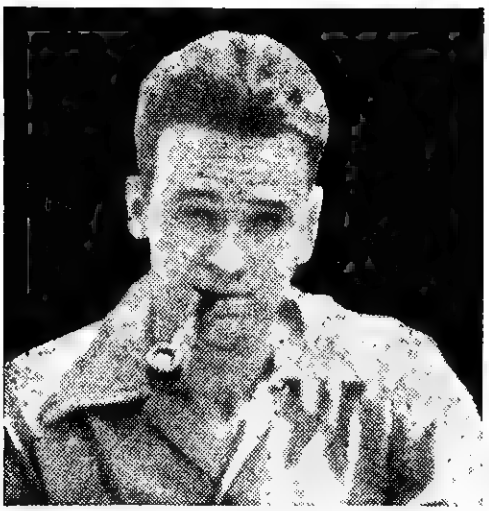
Meet the Authors



ROBERT W. GLUECKSTEIN

I WAS born, see! Much to the later regret of a lot of people—probably a lot of you readers after you read this, and I insist you do!

The fateful date was May 20th, 1917, making me, at this writing, 24 years extant. Everyone thought I was the cutest damn baby with my golden curly locks and beaming smile—I never cried! (An astounding fact noted by the scientists of that day with great awe and trembling.) And was therefore doted and feted by maw, paw, aunts and grandmaw to the point where I became an insufferable stinker—a characteristic which stinks—whoops—sticks to me to the present day. At the age of eighteen years, and some months I'd rather not recall, I awoke with a terrible hangover — (you know how it is when you've smoked too much with the herrings down the block)—my befogged and twisted mentality gave birth to the horrible idea that I should besiege editors with stuff which I would call humorous short articles just to confuse them.

Well, my depravity led me deeper and deeper into the realm of rejection slips and I found myself in dark places and holes in walls writing jokes. A few of them were sold to Colliers and the Saturday Evening Post by several cartoonists whom I plagued with my gags. Seeing these said slugs (the cartoonists) raking in all the dough for the gags aroused the mercenary nature in me. I decided to learn to draw myself and line my own pocket with 100% of the take. So I done it. Since I was my own teacher and skipped a lot of school, I stunk as a cartoonist for many years (four to be exactly) and maybe you still think I can't draw, huh? Well, it's still a free country and you're entitled to your opinions.

Furthermore, the editor asked for this autobiography—so shuddup! Anyhow I am sailing along peaceably making nice dough and so on when I am suddenly doing cartoons for Editor "Rap" for his Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures. This leads me to believe I have reached a pinnacle of some sort.

Like all cartoonists I am a character who is trustworthy, loyal, brave, kind and cheerful. I keep myself mentally awake, physically fit and morally straight and outside of that am stubborn, nasty-tempered, irritable, irascible, and really quite a card. In fact I occasionally make an awful ace of myself at parties of which I am the life of which.

I think I oughta insert somewhere along here that I was born, raised, and reside in Milwaukee—a fact which they'd sooner keep on the quiet, so don't mention it to anyone. The town would rather be famous for its beer than for such a distinguished, accomplished, intelligent son—.

Outside of taking a trip to Mars each summer in search of proper ideas for this magazine, I do little else with my time but eat and sleep and make Hildegarde merry. She is my wife so it's all right.

Cartooning, I find, is fun. You're your own boss, yuh sit at home all day cramped comfortably over a hot drawingboard and, (for exercise,) go down after the rejection slips which pour in with each mail. Make good resolves to do better next time. Do about 20 to 30 new gag ideas between eating and sleeping; draw up the few acceptances every now and then, cash the checks (you hope), and outside of that there is nothing to it—child's play really.

My only ambitions are to be the greatest cartoonist and humorous writer in the country, to make a comfortably cool million a year, and to keep on loving my wife. Maybe I have another ambition, but these will do for the present I'm sure.

I hope you all just simply love me too terribly and write Mr. "Rap" of this magazine and tell him he simply *must* buy more of my stuff.

ROBERT W. GLUECKSTEIN

(Editor's note: You'll notice that there are quite a few of Mr. Glueckstein's cartoons in this issue, and we will continue to run them. So, although we want you to write in and comment on them, don't worry about him not continuing to sell to us. We get a grand laugh out of all his work, even those we turn down!—Rap.)

DISCUSSIONS

AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

"COLORS FLYING"

Sirs:

I would say that the John Carter series bowed out with colors flying with "Invisible Men of Mars." In fact, the whole October number in general was good. I rate the stories this way:

1. Burroughs' novel.
2. The Ayre-Steber novelet. This is decidedly one of the most entertaining stories from the standpoint of good handling and good sf. that I've ever read.
3. The Pragnell novelet. Good, but occasionally it dragged a bit.
4. The Cabot short.
5. The Reed short. This was rather unexciting and below Reed's usual standards, and only the ending saves it from last place.
6. The Costello short. A fine idea, but it lacked something.

The front pic was a little better than St. John's August cover, but it could have been greatly improved. Paul's back cover was even better than usual.

Keep up the good work.

HENRY C. COSAND,
2016 Hudson St.,
Denver, Colorado.

Glad you liked the Carter series. Now that it is finished, we are planning the Inner World series. It is possible that we will run them in consecutive issues rather than alternate issues.

How do you like Paul's work on this month's back cover?—Ed.

COBLENTZ SATIRE

Sirs:

I was glad to see Coblentz again with a short novel. His satire this time again encompassed a whole country. Let's have more of this kind of story; about three to five stories a year.

Of all the Burroughs stories I've read, his effort in the October issue actually pleased me, but I'll have to rate Pragnell's (glad to see you back, English) sequel to "Ghost of Mars" first. "Mystery of the Martian Pendulum receives third place. "Flame For The Future" is terribly prophetic. Why must you print stories like that, which constantly remind us of the horrible condition the world is in?

Do you have back issues further back than June, '38? If so, at what price?

LYNN H. BERNHAM,
Crathersville, Ind.

We have back issues only from April, 1938. They can be had for 20c each, by addressing our circulation department.—Ed.

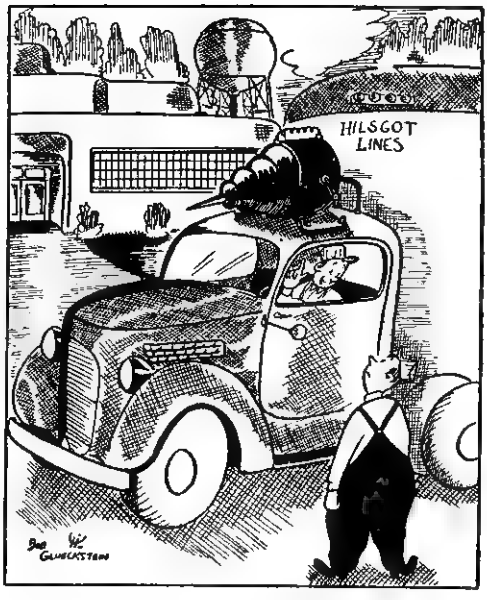
"ANIMALS THAT PULL RIVETS"

Sirs:

I didn't read more than three pages of "Kidnaped In Mars." I guess I'll never get used to people who use snakes for rope, or animals that pull rivets out with their teeth. I'm not in favor of long stories, if it means cutting the Discussions department.

CAL GOLDSTEIN,
209 Avenue M,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

The Pragnell stories, since their first appearance have held a peculiar appeal with our readers, and every time we run one, this appeal evidences itself. And your editor has felt that it is exactly the factor you mention that does it.—Ed.



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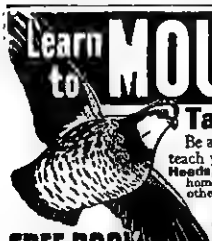

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DOESN'T LIKE "SCATTERING" JOHN CARTER

Sirs:

You have agreed that the John Carter stories were one romance about Llana of Gathol, so why scatter four installments so that the readers get only one every other month? I would like to read a serial novel in consecutive issues.

Now don't get me wrong; I liked Llana of Gathol, I liked the St. John drawings, I like Burroughs always, but I don't like the way you scattered those stories out.

When you get around to the Pellucidar novel, I hope you do something about it.

CHARLES W. WOLFE,
214 Grand Ave.,
Las Vegas, N. Mexico.

It is apparent to us that Burroughs is a very popular writer in Amazing Stories, and many of you want him every month But too much of a good thing—or is that a trite proverb? Anyway, we're going to comply with your request, and the three Pellucidar novels will appear in consecutive issues, with only one cover illustration to take care of the opening story of the series. Because of this change in policy, we will delay the appearance of the first story for a month or two to prepare our issues for the problems that a change now incurs. —Ed.

REGARDS TO O'BRIEN AND HIS WIFE

Sirs:

The October issue is just "super-colossal". Here's the way I rate the stories:

1—Invisible Men of Mars, one of the best John Carter stories I've ever read

2 -Mystery of the Martian Pendulum, worth waiting over a year for.

3—Kidnaped in Mars, I always like Don Hargreaves.

4—Sergeant Shane of the Space Marines, I think Shane and "Corky" ought to come back.

5—The World of Miracles, I won't say I didn't like this story, but—

6—Flame for the Future, I just plain didn't like it.

Fuqua sort of took over the inside illustrations, but all of his were good. Paul's back cover was good, as usual. St. John's front cover was better than his inside illustrations. Krupa can do better. Give my regards to David Wright O'Brien and his wife. I trust they will be very happy.

LIONEL BATTY, JR.,
1485 N. Morningside Dr. N. E.,
Atlanta, Ga.

Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien ask us to thank you, and hope their future stories will entertain you.—Ed.

CORRESPONDENCE CORNER EFFECTIVE

Sirs:

I want to thank you for running my request for correspondents for so long in the corner. I have since gotten over fifty, yes FIFTY, new correspondents from all over the world! And "darn"

swell people, too.

Your September issue was "scrumptious" as concerns everything. The covers were an artist's delight. The inside illustrations have improved throughout, and the Observatory (which is my favorite tid-bit each month) did my heart good. More power to you, and Amazing predictions are hereby made for your future.

MRS. DOLORES LAPI,
42 47th Street,
Weehawken, N. J.

Our correspondence corner may be inconspicuous, but it certainly gets attention. Your letter doesn't surprise us.

Thanks for your kind comments anent our column. We hope those amazing predictions don't include murder in a dark alley!—Ed.

EDWIN "COUNTS" OVER US!

Sirs:

Have just finished a cover-to-cover reading of the October Amazing Stories, and while it has dropped in my estimation from among the first three, it is not too bad. After all, someone has to write for the youngsters just beginning to read stf.

The authors you quote as the first ten in Amazing could be lumped under ten for my money, except E. R. B., Cabot, and Bond. Bond's stuff is spotty, some good, some not so good.

I agree with Mr. Evans and Doc Smith that more intelligence is needed along with the criticism. Perhaps if your publishers were not so tight with their purse strings, you could get better stories. The art in Amazing is as good as any, but there is room for improvement in all.

EDWIN COUNTS,
298 N. Washington,
Battle Creek, Michigan.

On the average, for each reader to agree with three out of ten of our first ten writers, is quite good. That sort of opinion is what put them there. As for the fans, and criticism, you'll note more in the Observatory this month about it.

As for our purse strings, you are finally and definitely wrong, as our authors will testify. We pay the best rates, and the fastest, in the field. No accepted story, unless for some special arrangement, remains in the house more than three or four days without a check being mailed. Rejected stories are sent back on most occasions on the same day they are received.

Our minimum rate is 1c per word. Good stories receive as high as 2c.—Ed.

A BURROUGHS CONVERT

Sirs:

The reason I started reading Amazing Stories is that I like Burroughs stories more than any others written, and when I saw John Carter stories featured in your quarterly issue, I simply had to buy it. Ever since then I have bought A. S.

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monthly. Now I think that A. S. is the best science fiction magazine published.

I have always liked stories by Wilcox too, and he comes second on my list. Third comes Bond.

The October issue was perfectly swell, with a capital S. "Invisible Men of Mars" is a masterpiece, next comes Reed's "World of Miracles". I think that third place should be a tie between "Kidnaped in Mars" and "Sergeant Shane of the Space Marines", in fifth is "Mystery of the Martian Pendulum" by Ayre and Steber. Sixth place and last but not least is Costello's "Flame for the Future."

Where is Magarian this issue? I miss his swell work, although the cover on the October issue couldn't be better.

How about an Adam Link story?

JACK HORNER,
6 Perry Street,
New London, Conn.

We are interested in your account of how you came to read Amazing Stories. And as for Burroughs, he'll be with us a long time, and there'll be more of the John Carter Stories sometime too. But there are other Burroughs characters to be considered. Perhaps the Cave Girl will be back, after Pellucidar has run its course.

Adam Link is scheduled for his finest adventure in a few months, with a cover by Fuqua.

Margarian will appear again, quite regularly —Ed.

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A CITY ON TITAN

BY HENRY GADE

On this month's back cover you will see Frank R. Paul's colorful painting of the skyscraper city of Orro, on Titan, the largest moon of Saturn, the ringed planet.

TITAN is the largest satellite of Saturn, being some three-thousand miles in diameter. It is very close to the size of Mars, and it is a much younger and habitable world.

Astronomers haven't decided the exact nature of the atmosphere of this world, but most of them agree that it is perfectly capable of supporting life, and find no direct evidence against this contention. They picture it as a world where civilization might progress much as it has on Earth, and is even very much in the same stage as it is here on our own world. Although it is smaller, its development has been impeded by the proximity to its giant parent, which had to cool down first, to allow its child a chance at life.

Thus, we find Titan almost a sister planet, with a few minor exceptions. The first of these is gravity. A man could leap twenty-two feet into the air on Titan. The attraction is considerably less. The second is atmosphere. It is a bit less dense than on Earth, and more than likely has a high nitrogen content. The third major difference, among these minor exceptions, is the light the planet receives. It is quite far from the sun, and therefore receives about one third the light Earth does. However, this is augmented by giant Saturn, whose high reflective power sheds additional sunlight upon the planet, making the nights much less dark than on Earth.

The city of Orro, which we see on our back cover, is a city of gigantic skyscrapers. These tall buildings are possible, because the weight of material on this world is perhaps one quarter what it would be on Earth. And therefore, buildings of greater proportions and weight can be constructed. This factor also allows for the greater use of metals. For instance, since Titan could easily have stores of the noble metals in much greater quantity, having been spawned of a world in great eruption at its birth, we see in Orro, huge skyscrapers built of gold, of a metal similar to the "orichalcum" of our own ancient Atlantis, and of alloys of copper and nickel.

Heights of two-hundred stories would be a common sight to the visitor to Orro. And great spires, towering into the heavens, would present an inspiring architectural scene.

The people of Orro are certainly not like the people of Earth, except that they have two arms, two legs, and a body constructed along the same lines as evolution on Earth has carried man. They have arm appendages which are supple and sinuous, and capable of handling delicate instruments and therefore of great scientific advancement.

Evolution has proceeded at a faster rate on Titan, because of its smaller size, and therefore we find that the people have insect-like characteristics. Their bodies are slim and wasp-like, and their waists and chests are like the thorax of an ant.

As a race, they are probably very religious, and because Saturn, the most unusual, incredible sight in all the solar system is the largest thing in their sky, they probably worship it as a deity. Even to Earth astronomers, the planet presents an awe-inspiring sight, and to these inhabitants of Titan, filling half their sky as it does, in its rainbow of colors, it must appear as the most mysterious and majestic thing in their lives.

Each of their buildings, in addition to being dwelling places, and places of manufacture and business, are temples of worship, the top of each building being a domed structure of worship where a fire is constantly kept burning as a votive offering to the planet that is their god.

Titan, still in a volcanic state, provides power from its volcanoes, harnessed by the people. Since Titan has no oceans, no rivers, no waterfalls, water power is unknown, and steam power is not possible. The planet is a cold one, and the volcanic heat is a necessity to heat the metal cities, and to provide energy for the highly developed thermal science that has evolved.

Food is grown on the slopes of volcanoes, and is of a mushroom type, to a great extent. Mushrooms grow swiftly in the reflected, polarized light from giant Saturn.

The food is harvested by hand, and carried to the cities in wide baskets that are carried on the heads of the workers.

Beyond the smelting of metal for city-building, industry is almost unknown, and harvesting is the business of every inhabitant.

Electrical and radio science is not developed, because of the tremendous interference offered by the static electricity formed in the rings of Saturn and radiated to Titan.

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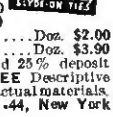

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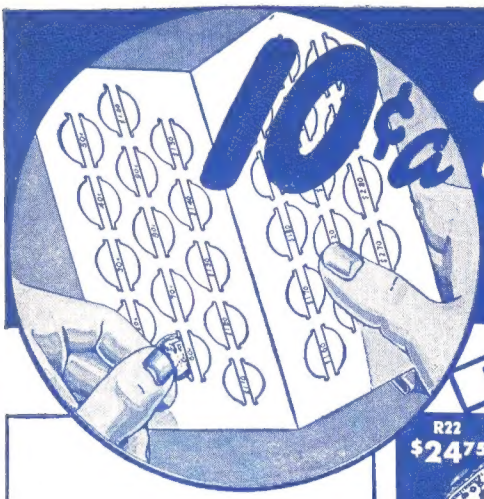

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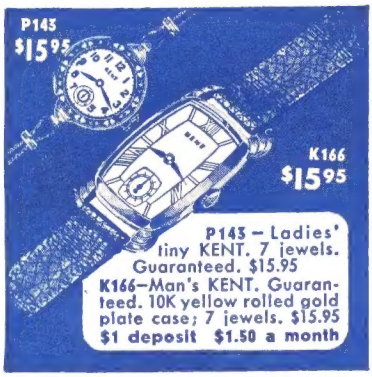

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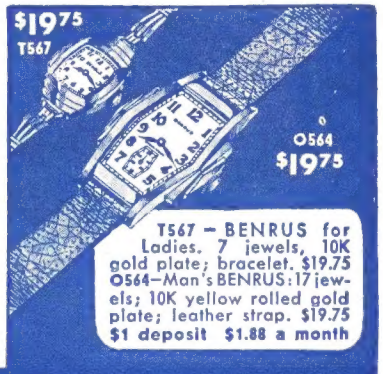

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